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LIFE, JOURNALISM AND POLITICS

LIFE, JOURNALISM AND POLITICS

By

ohn
J. A. SPENDER

Volume I

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To

M. S.

WHO HAS SHARED IN EVERYTHING AND EASED ALL BURDENS BY HER HELP, COMFORT AND COUNSEL

PREFACE

I HAVE necessarily drawn on memory for large parts of this narrative, but written memoranda and the considerable correspondence I have kept have enabled me to check my recollections at important points. To have escaped mistakes and made no statements that are open to challenge would be past hoping for, but I have endeavoured to avoid inaccuracy and malice.

Though a personal narrative must be written in the first person, I would ask the reader to bear in mind that the life of a newspaper editor is so essentially a collective thing that almost nothing can be recorded about it which does not imply the co-operation of colleagues and fellow-workers.

J. A. S.

CONTENTS

CHAPTER PAGE

1. THE BEGINNINGS 1
2. SOME OXFORD MEMORIES 12
3. A FIRST EDITORSHIP 25
4. FOUR YEARS IN HULL 39
5. FIRST YEARS AT THE "WESTMINSTER" . . 52
6. EDITING THE "WESTMINSTER" 62
7. THE NEW IMPERIALISM 74
8. THE SOUTH AFRICAN WAR 85
9. THE SMOOTHER AND HIS DIFFICULTIES . . 100
10. THE FREE TRADE CAMPAIGN 108
11. THE DAYS OF DECEMBER, 1905 . . . 122
12. THE LIBERAL TRIUMPH 134
13. THE MEN OF 1906 146
14. FOREIGN AFFAIRS 167
15. MORE ABOUT FOREIGN AFFAIRS . . . 183
16. A VISIT TO GERMANY 201
17. AN EVENTFUL YEAR 213
18. TWO STORMY YEARS 224
19. SOME DIFFICULT QUESTIONS 237

LIFE, JOURNALISM AND POLITICS

CHAPTER I

THE BEGINNINGS

A Medical Family—My Father and His Patients—My Mother and Her Novels—Accumulating the "Funds"—Some Childish Memories—Education at Home and at School—T. W. Dunn and Bath College—Bath in the 'Sixties and 'Seventies.

I

I COME of a medical stock; my father and both my grandfathers were doctors; and the family practice at Bath which my father took on from his father was flourishing in the Bath of Jane Austen. Often in later years when I have found myself in medical society in London, I have been asked whether I was any relation of "Spender on the Pigmentations of Rheumatism," and been able to reply modestly that I was his son. In the last ten years of his working life, my father was mainly a specialist in rheumatism, which he had had unusual opportunities of studying, as Physician of the Mineral Water Hospital at Bath. In these last years his patients came to him from all parts of the country, and he was able to devote himself to his chosen subject. But for the greater part of my childhood he was in general practice and worked indefatigably to make his means equal to the needs of a rapidly growing family. He never pretended to like doctoring, for the whole bent of his mind was literary and theological, and nature had designed him for a Deanery. But being in it, he was extremely conscientious and generous about it. He would not take a fee from any clergyman, priest, or Nonconformist minister, and again and again he cancelled the accounts or halved the fees of those whom he thought too poor to pay. In the house in Gay Street, where we lived till the year 1870, he had a free as well as a paying consulting-room, and he was always transferring his patients from the paying to the free room. Add to this that he was perpetually telling his richer patients that there was nothing whatever the matter with them, and that he held most ailments to be imaginary, and nearly all drugs useless, and it is scarcely surprising that he did not make a fortune out of medicine.

My father wrote several books on medical subjects and contributed many articles to medical journals, and to the Cambridge Dictionary of Medicine. Though he lived before the days of modern research medicine, his methods, as I remember them, were entirely modern and scientific. He kept the most elaborate records of his cases, whether in hospital or private practice, and accumulated material for years before venturing to write on even a small point. When he did write, he was highly fastidious about words, and had a natural sense of style which broke in upon the most unpromising subjects. To the end of his life he was a kindly but unsparing critic of my writings, and I was put to many shifts to prevent his eye falling on some of them. He had his own little store of literary memories, for when he was a student at King's College, his cousin, Crabb Robinson, the author of the Diary, had taken a fancy to him and invited him to his famous breakfast parties. Medicine apart, he was eminently a bookish man. All through his busy life he laboured hard to keep up his Latin and Greek, and really lived up to his own maxim to spend at least an hour a day on "some good author."

Between his patients and his books my father had little time for his children, and he had a reserve which it was difficult for children to penetrate. Journalism is thought to be an exacting profession, but after forty years of it, I am still of opinion that it does not compare with medicine as pursued by the general practitioner. He has no hours by day or night, weekday or Sabbath, which he can with certainty call his own; his holidays are short and have to be paid for by loss of fees; if he is a conscientious man, he feels acutely that life and death may be in his hands. My father suffered agonies of self-searching whenever a patient died under his hands without the cause being patent and unavoidable. I have listened silently as a child while he went over the ground with my mother—ought he to have done this, or not to have done that, was he to blame, could he ever forgive himself if——? It seemed to me terrible, and early the conviction came to me that, whatever else I might be, I could never be a doctor.

There were eight of us children, and I came third after two sisters in December, 1862. My mother brought us up; to us she was a radiant and beautiful being, the unfailing friend in happiness or trouble. W. B. Richmond, the painter, told me in after years that he had seen her at her father's house in London in the 'sixties, and that she and her two sisters were the most beautiful "trio of young women" he remembered. In all the years of my childhood, I cannot remember one angry word from her, and how sorely she was tried only her children can say. She has her niche in the Dictionary of National Biography, which records that she was a well-known writer of novels, and gives a list of her books, mostly, I am afraid, by this time forgotten. There is a little more to be said about these novels. Early in her married life she decided that, though my father's income might be enough for necessities, it would not be enough for the good things which she thought we ought to enjoy. So she set to work to write—a formidable undertaking for a young woman at that time—beginning with essays on the German poets which were published in magazines and quarterlies, and then plunging boldly into the three-volume novel. She found a public almost immediately, and it remained faithful to the end. For the next twenty years she wrote without ceasing in the intervals between housekeeping, bringing children into the world, and cultivating a wide circle of friends. I am accustomed to quick writers, but I have never seen any quicker than my mother. She seemed never at a loss for a plot or an idea; her pen flew over the paper; she went on with a circle of noisy children romping about her; she would write on the beach at the seaside, and, when all the rooms were flooded out at home, she put a table on the landing between dining-room and drawing-room and continued to write. So far as I know, never once did she fail to deliver a manuscript at the appointed time.

She was not without a certain literary vanity, and reviewers both vexed and elated her. I remember the excitement at home when the *Spectator* in a two-column review proclaimed her novel "Parted Lives" the best novel of the year, bar only "Middlemarch." I remember other times when I prayed that I might grow up quickly and be avenged on some felon who had wounded my mother. But these were only incidents in the heroic task of accumulating the "funds" out of the proceeds of the novels. There was first the fund for the university education of the four sons, £400 each (the rest to be found by scholarships), a total of £1,600; then the fund to provide holidays for the family; and finally the fund to add to my father's savings to enable him to retire before he was worn out, and to provide for daughters hereafter. All this was accomplished. With the proceeds of the novels, my three brothers and I had a university education, the family had generous holidays in the Lake Country, the Channel Islands, Ireland, Switzerland and Italy; and to this day I am administering a Trust which is distributing the income of the residue to various members of the family. With great daring a large part of these literary earnings was invested in the *Western Morning News*, which had lately been started by my two uncles, Edward Spender and William Saunders, but this greatly prospered and gave an abundant return.

II

Queer little memories come back to me from my early years, such as being taken by my father to the hustings on election day, 1868, and being greatly frightened by the noise and the crowd on that antediluvian scene. I still retain a mental picture of what an election was like in the days before the ballot, and can see the procession of figures wearing big papier-mâché masks intended to represent Gladstone, Disraeli and Bob Lowe. I remember being kept awake all night by a pious nurse who, being a disciple of the prophet Baxter, had decided—unknown to our parents—that the end of the world was coming in the early morning. It was a night of horror. As a child in the nursery, I was often in scrapes, but generally managed to scrape out of them, and was pretty persistent in getting my own way. Having been made to promise that I would not ask for a second helping of pudding when invited out to dinner with my grandmother, I achieved the desired result by saying quietly and reflectively when the dish was being removed, "Boys like pudding." When my nurse locked me in the nursery until I had consumed certain foods that I abhorred, I used to get down from my chair, take the pommels out of the rocking horse and deposit the forbidding morsels in its body. When she returned, I was piously contemplating an empty plate, and there was nothing to do but keep silence and look good. But I returned in sad disgrace from my first visit to London at the age of seven. On this occasion I had to take back with me for delivery to my mother, with my own hand, a letter from the relative with whom I had been staying, which contained this passage: "I am sorry to say that the child is radically untruthful. I took him last week to the Guildhall, and he stood in front of the images of Gog and Magog and repeatedly asserted that he saw Gog nod his head to Magog, whereas it is a well-known fact that the heads of both images are fixed." When I was ten years old and at my first school, I planned with certain other boys expeditions in the mysterious spaces under the roofs in our respective houses. On one of these my brother Harold suddenly disappeared, to our great consternation. He had stepped between the rafters and gone straight through a ceiling and landed—fortunately unhurt and on his feet—by the side of a lady who was doing her toilette. She was much vexed at the sudden arrival of a boy covered with plaster and dust through her bedroom ceiling, and our departure from that house was not in peace.

Another memory—being taken as a child to a house in the North Parade to see a charming grey-haired lady who presently went to the piano and sang softly to us, playing her own accompaniment. This was Madame Goldschmidt, the famous Jenny Lind, then about fifty-three years old. I wonder how many now living have heard her sing.

Then, of course, there was the old pensioner who told us stories of the Battle of Waterloo. Always at a certain point we stopped him with the question, "Didn't you want to run away?" And always he returned the same answer, "Where was we to run to?" No sham heroics on either side.

I was my mother's confidant from the age of twelve onwards. I knew the exact state of the family income, and shared her anxieties when my father's practice seemed to be falling off. I knew all about the wickedness of publishers, and was gravely consulted as to whether a contract should be accepted or offered elsewhere. I followed the vicissitudes of the "funds" and rejoiced when they mounted up. With my mother I planned most of the steps of my own education, and was left to decide for myself whether I should go to Winchester or remain a day-boy at Bath. My childhood was an entirely happy one. I had great freedom, a sense of responsibility, numerous interests and excitements and much indulgence without fussing at home. Many relatives invited us to stay with them in London, and often as a child I was taken to the House of Commons, and I still have a vivid recollection of seeing Disraeli on the front bench. My uncle and godfather, Edward Spender,* always said that I ought to be a journalist, but my father said sharply that I was not to listen to him.

Having flaming red hair and a deeply freckled face, I had a fighting existence at my preparatory school and much later, for I quickly found out that it was fatal to let myself be called "freckles" or "carrots" without retaliation. My mother mourned over my ugliness, but encouraged me to hold my own. She was always for enterprise, and was not at all disturbed when I shot the town weir in a brown paper canoe of home manufacture, or burnt all the skin off my hand in making fireworks in the scullery, or dared another boy to walk round the cornice—forty feet above the street—of a certain church tower, and had to do it myself because he did. My sensations when the clock struck and set the tower swinging in the middle of this performance are among the things that have remained with me all my life. On my fourteenth birthday I was mounted on a fifty-inch-wheel bicycle which the present generation would think an instrument of death and terror—and indeed, to this day I hardly know how I survived the constant snapping of its whipcord brake on the steep hills about Bath. It gave me a range of fifty miles, which on occasions could be extended to eighty or ninety, and took me to the sea on one side, and over the Wiltshire downs as far as Oxford on the other. It is a great thing to be one of a large family. I could start in the morning and return long after dark and not be missed, there were so many others. These long solitary rides in my fifteenth and sixteenth years are among my happiest memories, and there is no pleasanter day-dream than to go over the ground again, and see the towns and villages of the west country, and the high Mendips with their wooded valleys, as I saw them then. There was a great exhilaration in the old bicycle, and I still think with regret of the wide view from its high seat, the coasting down hill with legs over handle-bars, the constant emergencies and escapes in roads and lanes on which even a small stone might upset you. Awful spills I had, and many parts of my body bled profusely.

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* Edward Spender has deservedly been called the "Father of the London Letter." He came to London a few years after the *Western Morning News* had been founded and wrote its London Letter daily until 1878, when he was drowned with his two eldest sons in Whitesand Bay, Cornwall. He was a fine journalist, and developed the London Letter into the all-round comment on life and politics that it now is in the leading provincial newspapers. His fourth son, Col. Wilfrid Spender, is now secretary to the North of Ireland Government.

Then there were walking tours. From the time that I was fifteen and my brother Harold fourteen we were given five pounds each at the beginning of the Easter holidays and told to go; and if we returned within a fortnight we felt disgraced. We planned our own routes with maps and time-tables, roamed all over Devonshire and Cornwall—down the north coast and back by the south coast—or explored the Isle of Purbeck and the New Forest, coming back over Salisbury Plain. Hotels were barred as beyond our means, and we bargained every night for bed and breakfast in farmhouses and labourers' cottages, and were more than once reduced to a fourpenny bed in a common doss-house. As the money ran out we tightened our belts and prolonged our marches, which were sometimes as much as thirty miles in the day. Once, I remember, we fell in with a friendly artist who seemed to know all about boys. We were very hungry and he discovered it, and laughed uproariously when we told him that we made it a practice not to eat till we had done our day's march, and promptly took us to an hotel and sat us down to a big square meal. Then, finding that I had a sketch-book, he gave me a drawing lesson and put five shillings into my pocket. I never knew his name, but I still remember his face, and have thought of him gratefully all my life.

III

My parents were zealots for education, and we were pressed pretty hard. In looking over my father's papers after his death I came upon a batch of my school reports at the old Sydney College at Bath, where I was till the age of fourteen. They were nearly all devastatingly bad, and I seem to have been no good at anything but algebra and trigonometry. The only excuse I can think of is that I was judged by a standard beyond my age, for I was in the sixth form when I was thirteen, and my schoolmaster remarks—not unnaturally as it seems to me now—on the inadequacy of my studies in Virgil and Sophocles. Two years later Bath College was founded in succession to Sydney College, and T. W. Dunn came from Clifton to begin what has been generally recognized in the educational world as a great headmastership. What I owe him is more than I can tell. He was, in some ways, the most remarkable man I have ever known, and, for my school years and many years later, by far the strongest influence in my life. He gave me personal attention and kindness such as few boys at school can have had from a headmaster. I am happy to say that he is still living and vigorous at the age of ninety, and a yearly visit to him is one of the pleasures of my present life.

Dunn was a fine and exacting scholar, and his rule from the beginning was that he would have no boy in the sixth form who could not reasonably be expected to win a scholarship at Oxford or Cambridge. Practically all his sixth form boys came up to this standard, and for a period of twenty years no school of its size won so many scholarships at the Universities or had a higher reputation for classical studies. But he was to me and hundreds of others much more than a teacher of Latin and Greek. He was a perpetual mental stimulus, an opener of doors, and an unfailing example of high and disinterested purpose. He gave everything, including his own fortune, to the school, and taught incessantly the lesson of good citizenship and public spirit. Most of all, there was something about him which made meanness and underhandedness wither in his presence.

Among the lads at school to-day I can discover nothing quite like my own experiences during my last years at school. I was head of the school for three years and, as such, had considerable powers and responsibilities. In spite of everything else, games took quite a third of my life, and my ambition to get my colours was certainly as strong as that of winning any prize. But the remaining two-thirds were incessant hard work and often—as I was a day-boarder—prolonged till midnight and later. Greek and Latin composition was a delight and a torture; I would write and rewrite a few verses, take them to bed with me and dream of them all night. On four days in the week we learnt sixty lines of Greek and Latin by heart, and at the end of the term were expected to be able to recite a Greek play or a book of Virgil from end to end. On Saturday night there was the School Debating Society, and between Saturday and Monday an English essay to be wedged in between Chapels and ordinary preparation. And with it all was an unceasing argument about everything going on at home and at school, and exciting little dips into the unexplored world beyond, when some literary friend came to stay with my mother and brought news of the great ones whom he had seen face to face. Dunn often rebuked me for a scatter-brain, and with good reason. But the only thing he seriously frowned upon was the fiddle which I strummed to distraction with certain kindred spirits, who had the ambition of forming quartette parties. He said with much emphasis that out of a long experience he had never known a musical boy who wasn't morally infirm, and bade me break the thing and devote the time to some more manly occupation.

I suppose that from a modern point of view every possible fault would be found with this education. Having got a "leaving certificate" at the age of fifteen, I was "exempted" from science and mathematics for the rest of my school course, and had in consequence to do much laborious work in later years to make good my deficiencies. Yet, in spite of this gap, I count myself to have been supremely fortunate in my schooling. It kindled interests in all directions, led to omnivorous desultory reading, left me free to think my own thoughts, and prepared me for the universal busybodiness which is the most serviceable equipment of the journalist. Unfortunately, Dunn's work was too personal to be handed on to any successor, and when he departed, the school languished and finally died. Its chief memorial in Bath is the tablet in the Abbey which commemorates the ninety old boys who fell in the Great War. But it lives on in the memory of many hundreds of others who think with affection of their old schoolmaster and of the debt which they owe to the school.

I never return to Bath without thinking it the most beautiful city in England, if not in the British Isles. It is one of the few English cities laid out on a plan by architects of genius; and its streets, squares, parades, crescents, rising one above the other on the steep hillsides, have an extraordinary beauty and charm. To a child brought up in a stone-built city of classical design, all brickwork towns of modern construction seemed odd and foreign. A visit to London was like a visit to Amsterdam or Paris. It seemed natural to live in a "Circus" with all the orders of classic architecture deployed on the front of your house, and large stone acorns rising above the nursery windows, and very strange to live like my uncles in brick-built houses in London. Only in after years did it dawn on me what a rare, intricate and original thing that same Circus is, or how beautifully it is joined up with the splendid Crescent that lies beyond, and the Square that lies below.

Bath in my childhood was supposed to be in its decline, but legends of the great days hung about it. There were old people who claimed to have known Dr. Johnson's Mrs. Thrale (who came to live there after the death of her second husband, Piozzi), and still spoke familiarly of Beau Nash and Ralph Allen. Our own particular family legends were of Walter Savage Landor, who was intimate with my grandfather and grandmother, especially my grandmother, with whom he alternately flirted and quarrelled. There was a long story of a quarrel about a Pomeranian dog; I have forgotten the details and don't know how it ended, except that my grandmother kept a succession of Pomeranian dogs in memory of Landor, and the last of them was still living, though decrepit, when I was a child. I have now on my shelves the two-volume edition of his complete works which Landor gave—very handsomely bound—to my grandfather in the year 1847.

CHAPTER II

SOME OXFORD MEMORIES

The Victorian Household and the Modern—The Literary Background—The Sorrows of an Examinee—Encouragement from Joseph Chamberlain—Life at Balliol—A Grey Incident—Friends and Contemporaries—Memories of Ruskin—And of William Morris—Baiting the Authorities—The Master—A Balliol Dinner Party—A Talk with Browning.

I

THERE is nothing in which the twentieth century takes greater pride than its emancipation of youth. We who were brought up in the nineteenth century are supposed by our juniors to have lived in a prison-house from which new books and lively thoughts were excluded; and our classical education is derided as a mediæval pedantry. This seems to me, as I look back on my own early years, to be a very small part of the truth. We were as hot on the new scents as most young people to-day. Our classical education was literary all through; Virgil and Sophocles were taught as if they were living authors. The effort of translating English prose and verse into Latin and Greek prose or verse, or vice versa, kept a constant flow between old and new, and was quite as serviceable in impressing the masterpieces of English literature upon our minds as in teaching us Latin and Greek. The beautiful rhythms and intricacies of the synthetic languages taught something about form and expression which cannot be learnt from any modern language. If it is not the only way, it is a very good way, and one has only to read the masters of English literature to see what they got from these studies.

But we were certainly not cut off from the moderns. Looking back on it, the literary background of those years seems to me to have been extraordinarily rich and full. When

I was a schoolboy, Tennyson, Browning, Matthew Arnold, Swinburne, William Morris, Coventry Patmore, Carlyle, Ruskin, Newman,* George Eliot, Froude, Goldwin Smith were all alive and all acknowledged as great writers. And then in the scientific and philosophical fields there were Darwin, Herbert Spencer, Huxley, and Tyndall, exercising an influence on ordinary intelligent people which no corresponding group enjoys in these times, widely spread as popular science may be. I cannot think it to be wholly an illusion of advancing years that the acknowledged writers had a power and authority in those days which their successors have not obtained in these. I find the young people of these times going each his own voyage of discovery among new poets, new essayists, new novelists, and proclaiming their finds as their special and private triumphs. That sharpens wits and encourages the free spirit and is by no means to be discouraged. But it is entirely different from the process of the young Victorian, who had all his work cut out for him to keep pace with the acknowledged masters. We pounced on the new Tennyson or the new Browning, the last essay of Matthew Arnold, the latest volume of Froude, the new instalment of "Fors" or "Præterita," laboured faithfully at "Daniel Deronda," or Darwin's "Earthworms," or the "Data of Ethics." At the same time we devoted evenings to reading Shakespeare out loud, and passed through our Keats phase and our Shelley phase and our Byron phase.

I was brought up to believe Wordsworth the greatest of modern poets, and to this day his great sonnets, the pick of his lyrics, the Ode to Duty and the Prelude seem to me to stand on an altitude of their own in all the poetry of the nineteenth century. But we were also Tennysonians unashamed, and a little later adored Matthew Arnold and had much of him by heart. To me the great thrill—about my twentieth year—was the discovery of Browning. To get back into the Victorian atmosphere, one must take them in this order, Tennyson, Matthew Arnold, Browning. Passing from the "Idylls of the King" or "Empedocles on Etna" to the "Ring and the Book" was like bathing in a rough sea on a pebbly beach after floating on warm lagoons. It braced and challenged and left one battered and breathless. I can never think of Browning except as among the greatest poets. While keeping touch with tradition, he satisfied in us the instinct for adventure and the desire for "new forms" which are proper to youth. The authority of the elders was perhaps a little too heavy on us in those days, but it was not a pompous assertion by them of their rights, it was a genuine tribute to the place they had won in our affections.

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* Newman, up nearly to the time of his death, used to supervise the performances of Latin plays by the boys of Edgbaston Oratory School, and to prepare acting versions of these plays for them. When we were rehearsing the *Mostellaria* of Plautus at Bath, in 1880, I, greatly daring, wrote to him for advice, and he replied in a long and most elaborate letter in his own hand, advising what cuts were necessary and how certain scenes should be handled. The news of his death in 1890 reached me at the *Eastern Morning News*, in Hull, near midnight, when there were no books of reference handy, but I knew enough of his life and writings to be able to write a column and a half obituary. It has, I think, fallen to me to write obituary notices of all these eminent Victorians, beginning with Carlyle in the school magazine.

Between the ages of twelve and sixteen I read the whole of Scott's novels, conscientiously doing the grind at the introductions as the price of the joy to follow. I felt a void when they were finished, but never much disposition to return to them. Harrison Ainsworth and Wilkie Collins satisfied an appetite for shockers, and the "Moonstone" and the "Woman in White" still seem to me among the very best. There followed George Eliot and Thackeray, who were read through from end to end with the same thoroughness, and hard on these the early Hardy's and Meredith's, which my mother got at once when they appeared, and passed on to us. Dickens was less in favour in our household, and only the "Pickwick Papers," "Great Expectations," "Dombey & Son," and the "Tale of Two Cities" came into my hands before I left home. It was not till some years later that I discovered Jane Austen, but from the moment of the discovery she has never left me, and I never go a journey without her. She has one quality which I have found in no other writer, except possibly, at times, in Tolstoy. Reading her you seem to slip suddenly through a hole in space into her world. The miracle is effected at once without machinery or effort. It is not illusion or even art. You are there on the scene, seeing everything, hearing everything, almost joining in the talk. For the complete instantaneous refreshment of mind and spirit, the temporary blotting out of worry and vexation, I know nothing like it. It is like a change of air, going to the seaside; you can revisit your favourite spots; go to call on old friends, whom you are sure of finding at home, without ever being bored or wearied or feeling any sense of repetition. I have never felt quite the same intimate sense of gratitude to any other writer. It would be one of the privileges of another world to be allowed to say thank you to Jane Austen.

The reigning Americans were also a large part of our reading in the 'seventies and 'eighties. Emerson's Essays I had devoured before I left school, and for many years I was scarcely ever in the country without having Thoreau's "Walden" in my pocket. Edgar Allan Poe's stories and Nathaniel Hawthorne's "Scarlet Letter" and "The House of the Seven Gables" were also high favourites; and some of Russell Lowell's poetry, especially his great Harvard "Commemoration Ode," filled me with enthusiasm and at one time I had much of it by heart. At Oxford I discovered Walt Whitman and felt the something new, big and generous with which he had enriched poetry, but his prose interested me even more, and I read "Specimen Days" again and again.

Except for sundry novels, French literature was much neglected, but I learnt enough German at school to make it possible to read Goethe's "Faust," and presently it became imperative to learn enough Italian to read Dante as one would read Virgil or Sophocles. This opened up a new world of thought and emotion, and I can think of no literary education as complete without it.

II

In my own case the very discursiveness of these interests was fatal to the object that my headmaster and my parents had in mind, which was to fit me for an academic career, with university prizes as its immediate goal and a life of teaching to follow. Judged by results in the Oxford and Cambridge Public Schools Examination, I was in the top flight of scholars when I left school, and an Oxford tutor who examined me for Moderations told me in after years that my "pure scholarship" papers were very nearly the best of my year. But my interest in Greek and Latin was wholly literary; I had no aptitude for the critical kind of scholarship which was then coming up, and was early in rebellion against the commentators on the classics, most of whom seemed to me dry and inexcusably irrelevant. For these reasons and many others my academic career was disappointing to my parents and teachers. I was supposed to be in the running for university scholarships—Hertford and Ireland—and had to be content with what scholars in those days thought to be a very moderate reward for a "first in Mods." I fell to a second in "Greats," but for this I had some small excuse, for on the second day of the examination I had an attack of very sharp pain which remained with me and increased to the end. It was in all probability, as a doctor told me later, a mild attack of pleurisy, but whatever it was, it bleared memory and brain and made the examination a nightmare. In after years I have come to think of this rather humbling record as a blessing in disguise, for it closed the door on the academic life and compelled me at once to fend for myself. But at the time the second in "Greats" seemed an irreparable blow, and I wondered how I could ever face my parents or set foot in Balliol again.

Then a ray of comfort reached me from an unexpected quarter. When the news of the disaster came, I happened to be staying under the same roof with Mr. Joseph Chamberlain, and he actually, in the kindness of his heart, congratulated me on getting a second and said it was very good and exactly what his own son had just done at Cambridge. Even more cheering was his evident belief that the exploits of a lad in the examination room were of very little consequence in the scale of things. His attitude seemed to be that it was time to put away childish things, and get to the real business of life. This was novel doctrine to a Balliol undergraduate in his fourth year, but just then I was in the mood to receive it.

All the same, I look back with gratitude to my teachers, and I do not think there can have ever been a finer group of tutors than there were at Balliol in my time. The names of some of them are still famous in the College and beyond it—Thomas Hill Green, R. L. Nettleship, Arnold Toynbee, Henry Smith, A. L. Smith, Strachan Davidson—and they deserve to be long remembered. I got scholarship in just the literary and discursive way that appealed to me from P. J. de

Paravicini, a rather eccentric but very stimulating teacher, who was drenched in Latin poetry. To this day I remember with pleasure certain hours with "Paravi," when the whole sixty minutes went by, as after endless corrections and rejections he fashioned two lines of hexameters to his own satisfaction. It was a lesson in style and feeling for words which one could scarcely have got in any other way, and it comes back to me whenever I hear this ancient form of education derided. I was also a pupil of Robinson Ellis, the editor of Catullus, who was then expounding the prosody of Plautus and Terence to a select class. He was a singular, but profoundly learned man, with a mordant humour in his twisted body. So far as I remember, his scheme of prosody for the comedians consisted of a hundred rules with about two hundred exceptions to each, but I produced some exercises in that manner of which he quite approved. About fourteen years later I met him one day on the front at Brighton and recalled myself to his short-sighted eyes. He inquired what I was doing, and I modestly explained that I was living in London and editing a paper called the *Westminster Gazette*. "What a pity!" was the reply. "What a pity! I had always relied on you for that edition of Plautus."

The rest of the University encouraged the notion that Balliol men were "smugs," but this was not my experience. The College was large and lively; it had all kinds in it, and quite its due proportion of "young barbarians." In my first term, I shared a double set of rooms in the small front quad with a youth who is now a well-known peer, and we had only one "oak" or outer door between us. This "oak" was the subject of incessant assaults by my neighbour's friends, and he and I were constantly on the defensive. One night we sat for two hours in a vain attempt to keep the invaders out. They finally brought red-hot pokers and pierced holes which fatally weakened the fabric of the "oak," and then in a rush through landed on top of us. They left me alone, but carried off my partner, and did to him the sort of things that undergraduates do to their most intimate friends. More than forty years later I was talking over Balliol days with Lord Grey and I recalled that incident. "Of course," he said, "I remember that perfectly well, for *I* led that party."

I did not know Grey in those days, or until several years later after we had both gone down. But I saw him often, and he was conspicuous in College for his handsome figure, and had a great reputation for his many accomplishments in games of skill. More than once I heard that he had made good speeches in the Dervorguila debating society, an exalted body of select seniors, from which rumour occasionally descended to the two humbler societies (the Carlyle and the Brackenbury) of which I was a member. Grey describes himself as having taken his Oxford career lightly, but before he went down he had somehow got the reputation of being a man who could do anything he liked, if he chose to take the trouble.

I was fortunate in my years, and my own friends included an unusual number of men* who became distinguished afterwards as judges, writers, diplomats, scholars and philosophers. What was more important at the time, they were good friends and excellent company. Though few of us came into what is called public life, we were all up to the neck in politics and nearly all ardent Radicals. Cosmo Lang, now Archbishop of York, led the Conservative party in College, which put him, so to speak, on the opposite side of the street to us, but he came in and out of our group, ragging us as we ragged him, a delightful and copious talker full of zeal and fervour, with whom we had endless arguments. Of all youthful speakers I can remember he was the readiest and most eloquent. But none of us dreamt of him in those days as Archbishop of York; we thought of him working through the bar to politics, and conquering the summits of the secular world.

And then, still on the spot, but far out of reach, was Curzon, the unparalleled Curzon, so exactly then what he was in after years. He was one of the two hosts at the first "freshers" breakfast to which I was invited, and I can see him now at the head of the table, managing with perfect statesmanship the rather embarrassed company. I can see him again as President of the Union and have a queer little memory of the perfection of his silk socks and the bows on his shoes as he sat on the dais. Of all the men I knew in youth and have seen since, he was the one who changed least with the passing of the years. When I heard him in after years in the House of Lords, he was the same Curzon, with the same manner, the same voice, the same appearance, the same ideas, the same perfect preparation and faultless delivery that I remembered at the Oxford Union. His art was of the kind which is perfect at its birth, and it admitted of no development. I once had to follow him at a public dinner, and I thought with despair of my own loose ends and ragged thoughts, as I listened to the polished gem of oratory to which I could do nothing but provide the foil.

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* Among the Balliol men of this time, in addition to Grey, Lang, and Curzon, were J. A. Hamilton (now Lord Sumner); R. Younger (now Lord Blanesburgh); C. N. E. Eliot (lately Ambassador in Tokio); F. W. Pember (Warden of All Souls); A. H. Hawkins (Sir Anthony Hope); C. E. Mallet (Financial Secretary to the War Office, 1910–11); Louis Mallet (Ambassador in Constantinople); S. Alexander (Professor of Philosophy, Victoria University); R. E. Hardy (afterwards Professor of Greek at Edinburgh University); J. A. Smith (Waynflete Professor of Moral Philosophy, Oxford); H. L. W. Lawson (now Lord Burnham); M. O'Dwyer (afterwards Governor of the Punjab); G. R. Benson (now Lord Charnwood).

I imagine that we were rather exhausting to our elders, and I look back with remorse to my own disputations with certain tutors, who had been rash enough to encourage them. There was R. L. Nettleship, most patient and indulgent of philosophy tutors, who engaged you on seemingly equal terms, and then turned you inside out with a few questions which, with perfect politeness, he always refrained from answering himself. If anyone knew how to correct youth without wounding it, it was he, and the exquisite art of it lay in the simplicity and modesty of his own character. Then there was W. H. Forbes, a fine scholar, and very nervous man, with a bad stammer, who was always dying to talk politics to undergraduates, and desperately anxious as to what would happen if he did. I became much attached to him, and in after days he stayed with me in my lodgings in Hull, but my advanced views caused him great agitation of spirit and, I am afraid, some sleepless nights. I went to his room one afternoon and found him prostrate on his sofa. "Come in," he said, "but p-p-p-please don't talk about anything later than the F-F-French Revolution."

III

The hours spent with Ruskin are among the pleasantest of my Oxford memories. He was then Slade Professor (for the second time), and nearly the whole time I was up, I attended the drawing-school on two afternoons in the week. It was no necessary part of his duties to teach undergraduates to draw—for there was an excellent teacher, Macdonald, to do that part of the business—but he loved to come to the school and give his own kind of instruction. Once or twice he sat down beside me, while I was copying a Turner drawing, and taking the brush from my hand, practically did the whole thing himself, accompanying the lesson with a stream of talk which, starting from Turner, flowed on to Shakespeare, Plato, and the Bible. Then he would take two or three of us a round of the Turner drawings in the Taylorian Museum, discoursing with the old enthusiasm about his favourites. On one of these occasions he said dogmatically that Turner never painted a flower in his pictures, at which I somewhat impertinently crossed the room and pulled out a drawing in which a small thistle in flower was perfectly painted in the foreground. He said decisively and finally that a thistle wasn't a flower—which was what I deserved. On another occasion he defied us to find any architectural drawing of Turner's which was faulty in perspective. This was a fair challenge, and I took one and proceeded to measure it and proved incontestably that it had no vanishing point that worked. This he admitted, but he had his revenge, for the next subject which he set the class was to put opposite rows of hexagonal pillars (of which he drew the first two himself) in a true perspective. This devastated the class, and when next he told a lady water-colour student that he would have "none of her damned washings-out," we were nearly broken up. All the same I do not think that an amateur could have had a better sort of instruction than he got from Ruskin and Macdonald in those years.

Another memory of Ruskin comes back to me. The Russell Club, then, as now, an undergraduate Radical Club, of which I was at one time President, invited William Morris to deliver a lecture. He took as his subject "Art and Democracy," and we induced the Master of University to lend the College Hall as a suitable place for a lecture on art by an eminent poet and man of letters. Morris did lecture on art for five minutes, but he also lectured on Socialism for fifty-five, to the scandal of the Master and the eminent company of Heads of Houses and dons, who had come at our invitation to pay a compliment to the poet. The Master got up in a great fume the moment the poet sat down, and said that if he had known how the hospitality of the College was going to be abused, he would never have lent the hall. At this Ruskin uprose and chaffed them all off their heads in a speech brimming with humour, and ending with a rapturous description of a sunset, which made everybody feel ashamed of having disapproved of Socialism.

We were, perhaps, not quite so innocent as we appeared on this occasion. It was one of our pastimes to collect notorious and extreme politicians and present them to the affrighted authorities. I secured Henry George, the Land Restorer, again I think under the auspices of the Russell Club, and invited sundry dons and economic tutors to debate with him at the Clarendon Rooms. They came, and hundreds of undergraduates came too, and we had an uproarious time. George, being interrupted, lost his head and sat down in a temper after twenty minutes. Then a very solemn tutor got up and wanted to know "whether Mr. Henry George really considered a nostrum of this monstrously immoral character to be a panacea for all social evils." George was now in a towering passion. "Sir," he thundered, "are you a member of this University?"—intending to say something disrespectful about the University when the expected answer came. By pure chance he had hit upon the all too familiar question which the Proctor puts to an undergraduate caught in equivocal circumstances. There were screams of laughter in which the Georgites had to join with the rest, and the meeting broke up in wild confusion, while George shouted an inaudible invective from the platform. I tried in vain to explain to him afterwards what had happened. It was something beyond comprehension except to the Oxford mind, and most of all to the American. He said that, familiar as he was with Western America, he had never in all his experience seen young men who behaved with such unintelligence and ferocity as the students of Oxford University.

IV

To Balliol men of my time the word "Master" means Jowett and never can mean anything else, and much as has been written about him, I cannot pass this way without adding my word. I was not as a youth given to abase myself before authority, but, frankly, I quailed before Jowett. He was wise, he was public-spirited, he was totally devoted to the College, and stories were told everywhere of the generous things he did by stealth. We were proud of him as a figure in the University, and we conspired to invest him with legendary attributes. But why did he, term after term, go on asking undergraduates like myself to solitary meals with him, at which he said nothing, and they could only speak at their peril? I still think of these occasions with a shiver. Though I must have sat alone with him for many hours, I never succeeded in conversing with him but once, and that was in my fourth year, when he asked me what I was going to do in life. I hinted at journalism, and that suddenly made him voluble. He said it was an impossible profession which turned day into night, delivered you over to foolish partisanship, was fatal to good manners and honest thought. Besides, journalists wrote execrably. And then he told me how a famous newspaper proprietor had written to ask him to recommend a young man as a leader-writer, and he had replied recommending so-and-so as a distinguished scholar with a good style, and someone else as well primed in history and modern literature. "No, no," was the reply of the proprietor, "I want none of these, I want a young man who can write good sense in highly bombastic language." "I could have named him several," was the Master's comment, "if it hadn't been for the good sense."

The profession he adored was the Bar, and large numbers of us were instructed to begin eating dinners in our third year, advice which was quite acceptable, since it meant a pleasant interlude in London in the middle of term. I was told that I might think of journalism as a temporary prop to the Bar, but that I must go on eating dinners, as indeed I did.

I am sure Jowett was essentially kind, for otherwise he could not have put himself to the trouble of seeing so many of us with such unforgetting punctuality, but his snubs were unmerciful, and they seemed to be rather elaborately thought out. We used to go in parties of six to read essays to him after dinner, and each of us had to read his own essay out loud. If he was displeased, he rested his eyes upon the essayist for an intolerable time, and then without a word of comment just lifted them over to his neighbour with a "Next essay, please." Sometimes we were invited to ask questions, and some of the bolder spirits tried to draw him into an expression of the unorthodox opinions for which he was famed. They invariably failed, and when pressed, he pulled back sharply. I remember a discussion on "casuistry" in which one of us had posed the question whether suicide was ever justified. Jowett would have none of it, and peremptorily ended the debate by snapping out, "The scriptures forbid it." We searched the scriptures in vain for his authority.

It used to strike me in after days that he had a curious resemblance to Queen Victoria, and I never saw the aged Queen without having his face recalled to me, and understanding the better why some of her ministers quailed at the thoughts of their interviews with her. The Queen's famous "We are not amused" is exactly in Jowett's manner, and she seems to have had both his faculty for silence and for breaking it with the decisive word. Jowett in Balliol was, in fact, more like a ruling sovereign than a common mortal, and I think he was aware of the legends that had grown up about him and took some pains to live up to them. As a potentate he was admirable, setting an example of industry, public spirit and disinterestedness which had their effect on generations of undergraduates and helped greatly to the reputation of the College. His Court was the Master's Lodge, and there he gathered all the eminent politicians, lawyers and men of science and letters of his time, and the leading women, too. He was an adept at collecting and sorting them, and to see them come and go at the week-ends was one of the curiosities of life in Balliol. Now and again I was admitted into their company. One party specially I remember to which I was invited after dinner, and there in the drawing-room were assembled Browning, Matthew Arnold, Ruskin, Huxley, H. A. J. Munro and R. C. Jebb. The Master introduced me to Browning, who asked me many questions about undergraduate life at Balliol. The next afternoon I saw him alone in the back quad, and was thrilled when he came towards me and invited me to walk up and down with him. He put me entirely at my ease and talked freely and simply without the slightest air of the poet or man of letters. He had just then been made an honorary Fellow of Balliol, and was unaffectedly pleased with the distinction. He dwelt on it and said, in obvious allusion to the peerage recently conferred on Tennyson, "Some people think a peerage the right reward for a poet; *I* think a Fellowship at Balliol."

These are a few scattered memories out of a thousand. All sorts of incongruous things jostle each other as one looks back—the hot moment at Rugby football, the shivering half-hour before a maiden speech at the Union, the perfect day in the summer term, the cool plunge into the pool by Iffley Mill, the fritillaries in the meadows, the walk by the two Hinkseys, the rag in one's rooms. Above all there is the memory of a hundred faces, some of them never seen again, and all at this moment of youth. I can still hear the voice of the Master in Chapel bidding us concentrate on some chosen subject, and so to map out the forty years of our probable working life as to make them yield the utmost of intellectual and material satisfaction. At the time it fell on deaf ears, for Oxford pulled in all directions and kindled an insatiable curiosity. But that, too, had its use in after years.

CHAPTER III

A FIRST EDITORSHIP

In Attendance on Joseph Chamberlain—A Two-pound Secretaryship—An Election at Hull—The Crimes of the Private Secretary—An Interview with John Morley—A Sentence without Appeal—An Engagement on the *Echo* and the Sequel—Back to Hull—Editing the *Eastern Morning News*—A Puzzling Problem—Learning the Business—Provincial Journalism in the Old Days—A Sanitary Campaign—The Efficacy of Typhus.

I

IT was part of the family compact that while we should be generously provided for while we were at school or university, we should fend for ourselves afterwards, and I was determined to abide by it. But failing a Fellowship, there was nothing to do at Oxford; the Bar was closed to the impecunious, and so far as my education fitted me for anything, all that remained seemed to be schoolmastering, which I could never think of as my work in life. In my last year at Oxford (1885), I often lay awake at night thinking out the problem and going round in a circle from which I saw no escape. That somehow, some day, I would earn my bread with my pen had become a fixed intention, but I saw no way of starting on it that would even keep me in pocket money for the next year or two. So as a kind of insurance I put my name down at a schoolmastering agency, and dreamt of writing by night and teaching by day, until I could write myself into an independent living. Meanwhile I began writing notes and short articles and sending them to the *Pall Mall Gazette* and other London papers, and got a few of them accepted during my last terms at Oxford. Then one day my uncle, William Saunders, the inventor of news agencies and one of the real pioneers of modern journalism, paid me a visit at Oxford, and suggested that, if I had nothing better to do when I left Oxford, I might become his secretary and accompany him to Hull, where he was then standing as Liberal candidate. He disapproved of a university education and said bluntly that I had better have done with it as quickly as possible, and offered me two pounds a week—quite enough, he said, for a lad of my age.

He left me time to consider it, and I had not made up my mind when he asked me to make a fourth in a tour through Wiltshire, which he was taking in company with Mr. Joseph Chamberlain and Mr. Jesse Collings in order to provide them with material for the "unauthorized" Radical programme. This was glorious fun, and I jumped at it. Starting from Devizes, we drove about for two or three days in a carriage and pair, talking to farm labourers, inspecting cottages, gardens and small holdings, and spending the nights in farmhouses. The famous Wiltshire Radical Squire, G. P. Fuller, aided and abetted, much to the scandal of his Conservative neighbours, and Jesse Collings acted as guide and expert; I was a humble looker-on, but I took mental notes. Chamberlain, if I may repeat here what I have written elsewhere about this little excursion, left on me the impression, which was never obliterated afterwards, of being totally unlike anyone else, or anything which till then I had imagined a statesman to be. The orchid, the eyeglass, the inexhaustible cigars, the smart and even dapper appearance were so exactly the make-up that one would not expect in a tribune of the people that they suggested some clash in his personality. He was both alert and aloof, keenly watching, but keeping his thoughts to himself; kindly and courteous, but breaking into sudden scornful characterizations of individuals, a man of obvious mystery with rather frightening qualities held in leash, but not in the least self-assertive or overbearing. His voice was fascinating, but it had a dangerous quality in it, and a sentence begun in a low tone would come to a trenchant conclusion with something like a hiss. He was certainly not at all insensible of the "publicity" value of his idiosyncrasies, but they were so original in their design, and so neatly carried out that they were, as critics say, entirely convincing—which is more than can be said for the cultivated oddities of some public men.

One rather frightening incident comes back to me from this tour. Sitting at the opposite side of the table to Chamberlain at lunch one day, I happened in talk with my neighbour to mention the name of an Oxford man—a Fellow of All Souls—who had taken some part in Liberal politics. Suddenly Chamberlain's ears pricked up, and from across the table he asked, "Is that so-and-so I hear you talking about?" I replied "Yes," whereupon he grew black as thunder, and positively hissed out, "That man was once impertinent to me on a public occasion. That is a thing I never forget and never forgive." Even to have mentioned his name seemed an enormity, and I felt like sinking under the table. I looked up the incident afterwards, and found that the criminal had, in moving a vote of thanks to Chamberlain at an Eighty Club dinner, indulged in chaff on the solemn subject of "three acres and a cow."

Right in the middle of this Wiltshire driving-tour and sadly damping my pleasure in it, came the news of my downfall in "Greats," whereupon I immediately decided to accept the two-pound secretaryship. A fortnight later I was settled in Hull, where I was to spend the greater part of the next five years. Though living was cheap and Hull was nearly the cheapest town in the country, life on two pounds a week required some management. I got bed and breakfast and a very decent lodging for fourteen shillings a week, and since I went to bed at 3 a.m. and breakfasted at 11 a.m., I dispensed with lunch, and the *Eastern Morning News*, my uncle's paper, gave me tea, and a sandwich supper at midnight. So I only wanted dinner, and that I got extremely well for one, and twopence a day. There was no hardship in this way of living, and since I was plunged at once into my uncle's election in East Hull, I had neither need nor time for other amusements that cost money. I certainly worked very hard and seemed to give satisfaction. My uncle discovered to his surprise that though I did not know a word of shorthand, I could report his speeches better than the local reporters, and having made this discovery, he would have no one else do it. Having reported these speeches, it was natural that I should write leading articles about them, and this also I did, and apparently not without approval. In addition I had to keep the candidate's time-table, arrange his meetings and procure local speakers. It was a rowdy and vituperative election, much complicated by my uncle's quarrel with the Whig candidate for the Central division, against whom he was warmly supporting a Labour candidate. My uncle triumphed, he won his own seat in East Hull, and had the satisfaction of seeing the Whig soundly beaten through the splitting of the Liberal vote in the Central division. Then he departed for London, leaving much recrimination and commotion behind him, and since the editor wished to take a holiday, I was put in charge of the *Eastern Morning News* for the next few weeks.

II

I took this as a mark of confidence and supposed that I had done moderately well. On the editor's return my uncle asked me to spend Christmas with him and my aunt at their house in Streatham, and I went in good spirits. But on the last day of my visit he left a letter behind him to be given to me after he had departed to the City, and this contained my summary dismissal. The gist of it was not merely that he had no further occasion for my services, but that I had proved my incompetence from the first day of my engagement. He enumerated my errors under seven or eight headings. On such and such a day in September I had been instructed to order square envelopes, and I had ordered oblong ones; on such and such a day in October I had omitted from a report of his speech a passage to which he attached supreme importance; in the same month I had invited on to his platform a man whose opinions were intensely disagreeable to him; in the following month I had expressed in a leading article opinions which were altogether erroneous and calculated to damage his candidature; the next week I had gone to a concert at a moment when he had greatly needed my services, and so on. Each count of the indictment bore the date and full particulars. He explained that he had spared my feelings by forbearing to comment on these incidents at the time, but he had made notes of them, and when he saw what they totalled up to, he was forced very reluctantly, and in my interests as well as his own, to come to the conclusion that I was unfitted for the duties which he had intended for me. He added in kindly mitigation that he was aware that I had had a university education and that it took a long time to get over that. He enclosed £10 in lieu of notice.

This letter caused high indignation in my family, which was for breaking off all communications. But I knew my uncle well enough by this time not to take it in that way. It was his first experience of a raw young man from Oxford, and he really did believe that he was performing a conscientious duty in thus chastening me, and that he had behaved with great consideration in bearing with me without complaint for so long. My aunt, to whom I was always greatly attached, came on the scene as peacemaker, and civil relations were restored. But the two pounds a week was gone, and the problem of filling the gap was urgent. For a short time I stayed with a relative in London, and wandered about day by day like one of the unemployed, though continuing by night to write notes and short articles which, judiciously addressed to the few editors I knew, brought me a little pocket-money, and enabled me to keep the £10 in hand.

Like most young Oxford men of my time, I had secured an introduction to John Morley, I think it was from Max Muller, and he made an appointment for me at Elm Park Gardens one morning in January, 1886. He was kind, as always, but scarcely encouraging. He said he would assume that I could write, but wanted to know what I could write about. The question was disconcerting, and I floundered deeply. For an interminable period his only comment was "Ah," with a deep breath. Then he picked me up a little and said, of course, that was what I had to find out. After that he talked for a few minutes about style and journalism and the difficulty of "keeping head above ink in the murky tide," and earnestly advised me to go back to the provinces and there learn the business of a journalist before I thought of storming London. He cited Stead, called him "the most vivacious of the tribe," and said he had learnt his job in Darlington. I went away sorrowful. I had just come in disgrace from the provinces, and now I was told to go back.

I had one other introduction—to Le Sage of the *Daily Telegraph*, and a short interview with him was followed by an invitation to submit three specimen leading articles for the consideration of the editor. My spirits rose and I sat down very seriously to the job, writing, tearing up, and writing again, by day and by night, until the three dreadful things were accomplished and sent in. Then I waited for three weeks and at last the answer came. It was briefly to the effect that my compositions not only did not come up to the standard that the *Daily Telegraph* expected from its leader-writers, but that they showed no sign that I should ever be able to reach that standard. I tried for a moment to soothe my vanity by the thought that my politics were distasteful, for I was an impassioned Home Ruler, and the *Telegraph*, like other London papers, was in the throes of the first Gladstonian crisis. But there really was no loophole for this; I had not written about Ireland; it was my style and my ability that were condemned.

Ardent youth is supposed to rise above these rebuffs; to set its teeth and vow that they "shall hear it." I felt deeply dejected and in the gravest doubt whether I had not mistaken my vocation. Everything pointed to this conclusion. There was my second in "Greats," the decisive verdict of my uncle, and now this sentence without appeal from the *Daily Telegraph*. I still had a shred of academic distinction, and I went again to the scholastic agencies and this time put my name down as a candidate for an immediate appointment. That also I knew to be not my vocation, but at least, it would be bread and butter. But for two friends who were inexhaustible in sympathy and encouragement, Barnett of Whitechapel, and York Powell, the historian, who lived at Bedford Park, I should almost certainly have taken this line of retreat. Both said, hold on, and helped me to get a few occasional articles planted. At Barnett's invitation I settled in Toynbee Hall about the middle of January, 1886, and there I was soon plunged into the work of the Mansion House committees and sub-committees in that black winter of unemployment. At Toynbee Hall there was other delightful companionship and, most important of all, it was there and in this month that I met the girl who six years later was to be my wife. But not a few of us were running about our allotted task of relieving the unemployed with a cheerful doubt whether we should not ourselves be subjects for relief in a few weeks' time. Still, York Powell kept saying that he never yet saw the righteous begging their bread, and, though he had nothing to propose, that somehow kept one's spirits up.

Then one day I heard that Passmore Edwards, who had lately bought the *Echo* back from Carnegie, wanted a writer, and though the few journalists I knew predicted disaster if I tried that door, I felt that a little more buffeting could do no harm. So I went boldly and called on Passmore Edwards, and to my immense surprise was engaged on the spot at a salary of six guineas a week, and required to do no more than attend from 8 to 11 in the morning. This was wealth beyond my dreams, and left more than half my time free for Toynbee Hall and other journalism. Schoolmastering went back into the limbo, and I compared my position favourably with that of my Oxford contemporaries, very few of whom were earning anything in the year after they left Oxford.

This was the beginning of April, and for six weeks all went swimmingly. In Passmore Edwards I seemed at last to have found someone who appreciated my gifts. I wrote one short leader and two leader-notes daily, and special articles, generally on some phase of East-end life, boys' clubs, housing, etc., and he warmly approved. Then, for reasons I never understood, I began to give dissatisfaction. He said he was greatly disappointed and noted a serious falling off in my work. Before the end of June he was not only disappointed but extremely angry. He would summon me to his room and, holding one of my compositions between the tips of his fingers tear it into little pieces over the waste-paper basket, shouting at the top of his voice, "Call that a leading article, call that a leading article!" It so happened that I shared a room with the original "Capt. Coe," the famous sporting-tipster, and the sympathy and consolation I had from him sustained me through many evil days. But he said truly that the future lay with him and his and not with me and mine, and earnestly advised me to drop "heavy journalism" and come over to his department.

At the end of every scene I resigned, as pride required, and then Passmore Edwards would half apologize and tell me to go on. But in the middle of July, when I was about to start on the fortnight's holiday which was the yearly allowance of the staff, he sent for me and told me abruptly that I might draw my money and go, for he should have no use for me when I returned. He added a homily about the failure of what he had hoped was a promising experiment, and led me to understand that his grey hairs were being brought down in sorrow to the grave by the perpetual disappointments he suffered in his efforts to help struggling young men. He had great qualities, as the world knows, but patience with youth was not one of them.

The adverse verdict now seemed definite and final. All the same, I had a little money in my pocket, and I threw the whole mortifying business behind me for a glorious fortnight with my mother in Switzerland, and was out every day with a guide—whom she paid—on the peaks above the Zinal valley. From the mountain tops all the difficulties seemed to vanish, and I returned in high spirits to London and Toynbee Hall for a fresh start with the few connexions I had picked up in casual journalism. Within twenty-four hours I was down with malignant scarlet fever and had to be taken in an ambulance to the London Fever Hospital, where I remained for eight weeks, and was treated with extraordinary kindness and skill. Then just before I left the hospital came a kindly letter from Passmore Edwards, enclosing a cheque and saying that after all he would be willing to give me another trial. But within a few hours of it there came also a letter from William Saunders, saying that the editor of the *Eastern Morning News* had suddenly fallen ill and was not likely to be able to live in Hull again. He too, in all the circumstances was willing to give me another trial. Would I go to Hull and see if I could take the editor's place, of course, strictly on probation, and with a salary which would rise to £5 a week after so many months in learning the business? I weighed the two things. Whether I could give satisfaction to either was extremely doubtful, but Passmore Edwards had now definitely taken sides against Gladstone and Home Rule, and I was absolutely determined not to write to his order on that. My uncle, on the other hand, having followed Chamberlain half-way on Home Rule and lost his seat in Hull for so doing) had made his peace with the Liberal party on the Irish question, and was in other respects an extreme Radical. Then there was John Morley's advice to go and learn my business in the provinces, and that, I think, determined me.

III

So three months before I was twenty-four (October, 1886), I found myself editor of a morning paper in a great provincial town. I went sadly, for I had many minor and one most powerful reason for wishing to be in London, but it was arranged that I should come up to London for two or three days every six weeks to see politicians and attend to business in the London office. I was to be half manager as well as editor, and the prospect was held out to me that, if I made a success, I should eventually be a partner in the enterprise. That sounded well, but my uncle had said frankly that there would be difficulties and when I got to Hull and asked for the necessary disclosures, I discovered that for a year or more the paper had ceased to pay, and the manager told me that my uncle had intimated that, if it made more than the most trifling loss, he should dispose of it to the first bidder. I have wondered since that he, an experienced man of business, should have pitched upon me, whom he knew to be entirely ignorant of newspaper management and finance, and of whose academic shortcomings he was painfully aware, to redeem its fortunes. To this day I cannot imagine what was in his mind, but there I was, committed to this desperate-looking enterprise, and there was nothing to do but to go on.

The world in which the kind of newspaper that the *Eastern Morning News* then was pursued its business has clean vanished, but some glimpses of it may still have a curious interest. The paper consisted of four vast pages, and its main use to its readers was to supply the local news, especially the local shipping and business news. There was no other morning paper in the town, and since in those days no workman bought a penny morning paper, its readers consisted almost entirely of the local business men and shopkeepers. Most of these, as I soon discovered, hated it, for with few exceptions, they were staunch Conservatives, and its politics were advanced Radical. They took it because they had no option, and because it contained certain news, especially shipping news, not to be obtained elsewhere. But their patience had been strained beyond endurance by my uncle's electioneering, for he had stood not only as an ordinary Liberal and Radical, but as an uncompromising Henry Georgeite, and had used this commercial organ to denounce landlordism as robbery and landlords as thieves. Thousands of its readers, in consequence, had given up the paper, and the leading tradesmen were withdrawing their advertisements.

My uncle was honestly unable to perceive any relation between his politics and the decline of the newspaper, and no one in the office had dared tell him. He was convinced that the result was due to waste in the office and unbusinesslike methods of distribution outside. When the manager communicated the secret to me, he earnestly begged me not to let my uncle know that he had ever hinted at such a thing. For the slightest reflection not only on the efficacy for salvation of the Henry George faith, but on its business value for commercial men, who were not landowners, and who, as he argued, were bound to profit from the extinction of property in land, kindled a wrath before which the whole office quailed. I was, therefore, left alone with the secret, and the manager politely conveyed to me that my problem was to reconcile a strict adherence to the principles of Henry George with the recovery of readers and advertisers who detested these principles.

It seemed a very mad world ; London journalism was difficult enough, but, so far, it had presented no problem remotely resembling this. I decided that I would keep quiet about Henry George and be content to give my Tory readers the normal dose of Liberal politics. But Henry George was always creeping in by the back door. For the truth was that I did not believe in Henry George and was always letting that be seen. I would write an article on some entirely remote topic, but in a moment of forgetfulness include a sentence which implied that landowning was a legitimate form of property. Or there might be a sale of land in the East Riding and an innocent reporter would adopt the common assumption that it was a lawful transaction and say something complimentary about the robber-owner. My uncle read the paper each day with an eagle eye for these lapses from the faith, and when he discovered one, wrote me a letter of solemn rebuke which he signed "Yours faithfully." Worse still, he not infrequently enclosed a letter over his own name correcting these "errors," which he insisted should be published in the paper.

What was I to do? I was being give a last chance; all the proprietors I had hitherto encountered had considered me very nearly hopeless, and if I broke with my uncle, I was finished as a journalist. I decided to peg away and treat it as a good but rather grim joke. It was rather much of a joke, for I often got two or three of these communications a week, and coming at midnight with the London parcel they were rather distracting to thought. But I soon discovered that the best plan was to leave them unanswered, and I contrived to lose some of my uncle's letters intended for publication without incurring worse than a rebuke for carelessness. I tried more than once to put the situation before him, but without result, and to the end he remained stubbornly of opinion that only my failure to commend the doctrine prevented it from being acceptable to the non-landowning business community of Hull.

By this time I was beginning thoroughly to enjoy my work, and the town of Hull, so far from being the dreary flat that my London and Oxford friends declared it to be, seemed to me full of life and interest and inhabited by the kindest and most hospitable people. I loved the broad Humber and the view over it to the Lincolnshire hills, and could walk for hours on the dockside. There were charming houses a little way out of the town, and all of them seemed to be open and welcoming. I found friends to walk with on the Wolds; I captained the newspaper cricket club which played a match once a week, could get an hour at the nets at the Town Club, and as much lawn tennis as I liked. But there was no shirking the laborious work of the office. I started the night's work at eight, was seldom in bed before four in the morning, and had to be at work again on the business side from half-past eleven till two. The few academic frills which still remained to me were very soon shed. I discovered that my elaborate leading articles on Home Rule or the state of Europe were of little consequence compared with the shipping news or the local market reports. A fraction of a penny wrong in the price of cottonseed caused more trouble than any political crisis; and in the halfpenny evening paper, which we published later in the day, the starting prices of obscure animals were an unceasing worry. I went "on 'change" to study the business mysteries for myself, plunged head over ears into the local dock and railways struggles, and found myself passionately taking sides for the independence of the Docks and the competing Hull and Barnsley Railway against the all-devouring North Eastern. No one who has not taken part in these struggles can imagine the profound emotions that they excite or the strain which they impose upon good manners. I remember sulphurous interviews with railway magnates who had presumed that the editor of the *Eastern Morning News* would be a submissive elderly gentleman instead of a young spitfire proclaiming the independence of the Press and his own right to say what he chose.

IV

Journalists of to-day will scarcely credit the interminable hours of the old provincial newspaper office. We went in, as I have said, at eight o'clock in the evening, and for the next three hours were disposing of the local news and writing any leaders or comments that were necessary on local affairs. Then the decks were cleared for high politics. The London letter came in a parcel by train about eleven and was supplemented by late paragraphs which were telegraphed. But our chief material was reports of public speeches, which poured in on a detestable "flimsy" from about half past ten till one in the morning. We were by no means in the first flight of provincial papers, but it never occurred to us as possible that speeches by Gladstone, Salisbury, Chamberlain, or Hartington should receive less than the full honours of a verbatim report, and we were often in grave doubt whether we were doing right in reducing others to a column in the third person. Often we came out with five solid columns of the utterances of these eminent beings, and a terrible business it was to get them to press in coherent form. The "flimsy" would be unintelligible or illegible; the end would come before the beginning; whole sheets would be missing and others wrongly numbered. In despair I have written and put into Mr. Gladstone's mouth eloquent sentences which he ought to have spoken and which at any rate, seemed necessary to make his peroration suit his exordium. And in the intervals of these struggles something called a leading article, attacking or defending the speaker, had to be written and sent to press before the last part of the speech had arrived. At first it terrified me, but I quickly discovered that it was a much safer game than it looked, for only once in a blue moon did any of these eminent beings say anything that, given his subject, he might not confidently be expected to say.

At half past two the last of the writing was done and then there remained the proofs, and my uncle had impressed upon me that the great Delane never left his office until he had seen not only the galley but the paged proofs to press. This would have taken me to past four, and it was more than flesh and blood could stand. With a guilty conscience I generally chanced the paged proofs and got back to bed by four or a little later. Once or twice in these small hours I met a colony of rats migrating from one dock to another, in single file head to tail, with the uncanny appearance of a moving cable; and sometimes I followed the gleam of a blazing oil mill and turned reporter for the occasion. There are no better fires than these in all the world, and I had always run to a fire.

Hull in those days was notorious for its slums, and a few months after I came there, a courageous Medical Officer reported that twelve thousand houses in the borough were unfit for habitation. This was a challenge to a Toynbee Hall man, and I was soon agitating in the paper and getting myself into serious trouble with the Town Council and its Sanitary Committee. But a little group of Hull people came to my aid, among them R. H. B. Nicholson, a well-known surgeon, one of the best and most distinterested of men and through all these years the kindest of friends, who was willing to do anything to wipe away this reproach. He and I planned a campaign, and presently we were joined by Malet-Lambert, vicar of one of the Hull parishes, who was ready to work and to write and to preach at any moment. We decided that we must know the facts, which were hotly denied, in spite of the Medical Officer's report. So we mapped out the slum areas, visited a large number of the 12,000 condemned houses, and made our own notes of their conditions. It took us many months, but at the end I had ample material and wrote a series of articles setting out the facts. For a time the result was insignificant and the wrath against us great. We were said to have libelled the town; statistics were produced to show that the areas I had described yielded the lowest death-rate within the borough boundary, which was possibly true, since the dwellers in them were generally taken to hospitals or infirmaries to die. I appealed to London and the Local Government Board, but was told that it had no powers except to order an inquiry, leading at best to a mandamus at which the local authority would snap its fingers. I went over to York and prevailed upon Archbishop Thomson to come over to Hull and address a public meeting which we organized. He spoke out most manfully and braved all the local wrath by reading passages from my articles and calling upon the authorities to end the scandal.

For a time nothing happened. We had rather rashly predicted epidemics, but not even chicken-pox followed. Then one day Nicholson rushed into my office and said, "It's better than anything we predicted, it's typhus." Typhus was then an all but extinct disease, but it had broken out in the middle of our blackest area—the "Rabbit Warren." We did not seek to hide this light under a bushel. We pulled out our notebooks, revisited our slums, and I am afraid rather frightened the people of Hull. But typhus did what we had failed to do, and schemes were soon out for the clearance of the "Rabbit Warren," which is now scarcely a memory. It was fortunately not a heavy epidemic, but it sufficed.

CHAPTER IV

FOUR YEARS IN HULL

Another Disaster—A Glimpse of Nietzsche—The Staff at Hull—J. L. Garvin as Contributor—A Visit from Matthew Arnold—A Hard Bargain—A Talk with Gladstone—The Parnell Divorce—Departure from Hull—At Toynbee Hall—Free-Lance Journalism—Appointed to the *Pall Mall Gazette*—Its Sale—Foundation of the *Westminster Gazette.*

I

FOR eighteen months all went well; the paper recovered, the advertisers came back, and my worst anxieties were relieved. Then suddenly, in February, 1888, I went down with pleurisy and pneumonia, and for many weeks lay desperately ill in my lodgings. I pulled through, but I was out of action, and the doctor shook his head over a stubborn night temperature. I came to London and saw a specialist, who was most definite in his opinion. I must never try to live in Hull again; I must go to the Engadine at once and remain there over the winter. I went rebelliously, vowing I was quite well, and told my uncle I should be back again in Hull by September, and begged him not to fill my place. All the same I was in the depths. This was my last trial and I had failed. I was back again on my parents' hands; they were infinitely kind, and would not let me think of money; but my vow not to come on them was broken, and I saw no future.

At the beginning of July my mother and I were settled in a little hotel in Sils Maria (the first turning to the right as you come up from the Maloja on to the Engadine plateau). The hotel was empty save for one German who seemed to be a very eccentric being. I see him now with his immense untrimmed moustache and fierce eyes gleaming through heavy eyeglasses. He was the third at a long, unoccupied table at meal times, but he sat remote from us, and for the three weeks that we were under the same roof we never exchanged a word. We assumed that he knew no English, and I was shy with my German. Some years later I discovered that this was the philosopher Nietzsche, the Rousseau of Prussianism, who was a regular frequenter of that hotel, and was then in the last weeks before the mental catastrophe which ended his career. Though I read his works with avidity ten years later, his name would have meant nothing to me at the time, and to him we were merely tiresome English people breaking his accustomed solitude. Nevertheless, we earned a good mark from him, for I am told that in an entry in his last Diary he said that there was happily no one in the hotel but a young Englishman and his mother and they were inoffensive.

It rained incessantly all through this month of July. Day after day the mountains were blotted out, and for all the eye could tell, the Engadine Valley might have been a fog-bound fen. Yet after a few weeks I was astonishingly well, and at the beginning of September snapped my fingers at the doctor and made a bolt for home. My uncle had been kind and forbearing, and the office chair was still waiting for me at Hull. The conditions were now easier for me. I was able to appoint an assistant-editor, and was fortunate in getting a brilliant young Oxford man, H. W. Orange,* who shared my work and was a most congenial companion. Orange went afterwards to India as Director of Education, and has since had a highly distinguished career in the Board of Education at home. Journalism was to him only a brief episode, yet he had a remarkable skill in writing, and an aptitude for debating with his pen which might well have carried him into the highest flight in journalism, if he had chosen to persist in it. The London Letter was now in the hands of Harold Cox and my brother Harold, and among my contributors in Hull was an unknown writer, signing himself J. L. Garvin, whose comments on public affairs, conveyed in the form of letters to the editor, struck me as of uncommon quality and originality. I tried in vain to discover who J. L. Garvin might be, and to induce him to disclose himself. I imagined him to be a mature man of hidden talent, probably engaged in business

* Now Sir Hugh W. Orange, Accountant-General to the Board of Education.

during the day, and finding this outlet for his thwarted gifts in the night season. But no one knew him or had heard of such a man. It was not till thirteen years later that the distinguished editor of the *Pall Mall Gazette* (as he had now become) revealed to my wife at a London dinner party that he was the author of these letters, but had been afraid to declare himself, because he was then only about sixteen years old, and had expected to be sent about his business as an impertinent child, if he had shown himself in the flesh. It is sad to reflect that an editor of twenty-six could have inspired this thought in a lad of sixteen, and I have always regretted the lost opportunity.

With Orange, Harold Cox, my brother, and J. L. Garvin on our staff or among our principal contributors, we were not so badly equipped, and things went well enough. Friends were abundant, one of my sisters married a Hull schoolmaster and settled in Hull. Londoners have a strange idea that provincial life is dull, but I have never seen anything in London at all to equal the activity in keeping themselves amused and instructed which people of all ages displayed in this Yorkshire town. Everyone knew everybody; there were almost no social barriers, hospitality offered with both hands. Through it all we had orgies of culture, culminating in a performance of the *Alcestis* (in English) followed by the *Mostellaria* of Plautus which I translated for the occasion in mixed verse and prose.

We were visited periodically by eminent politicians come to make speeches, or other eminent beings who lectured for a fee. I saw most of them and interviewed some. One afternoon I was sitting in my office bringing out the weekly paper when who should walk straight in, without card or announcement, but Matthew Arnold! I was overwhelmed, for my admiration for that remarkable man was barely this side of idolatry. He said with every appearance of diffidence that he had come to me to help him in a personal matter of some delicacy. He was going to deliver a lecture at the Literary and Philosophical Society, and it was very important to him that it should not be reported. This was disconcerting, for I had put three reporters on to the job and fully intended to give it verbatim. Moreover, if I held my hand, it was quite likely that the *Yorkshire Post* or the *Leeds Mercury* would do it, and then what would happen to me? I explained my difficulties, but he said they were nothing to his. He was going to deliver the lecture in four other places, and it was finally to be published in a monthly Review, which would give him a handsome fee, if it had not appeared in print, but nothing at all if it had. Was I really going to take all that bread out of his mouth? Had I no sympathy with an impoverished fellow-writer? It was too much and I began to yield. "Let me have two columns," I said, "that won't be much more than half." "No, no," he begged, "not that, not that. Two columns would be too dreadful, half a column, I implore." "A column and a half, then," I said firmly, "I really daren't say less." Then he got up from where he was sitting and walking round to my side of the table, put his hand on my shoulder and said in his unforgettable soft voice, "Come, come, as one Balliol man to another." I collapsed and he got off with something less than a column.

I went to see him at a friend's house after the lecture (which was one of the famous "Discourses" that gave so much offence in America) and he talked till midnight mainly about his American experiences. Two things I remember. He took a little card out of his pocket, and on it was printed "The Matthew Arnold Troupe." "That," he said, "was my *carte d'identité* in America." Next he told us of how he had had some difficulty in making himself heard when he first visited New York, and how, on his return to that city, he saw large posters outside the lecture hall announcing that "the Management absolutely guarantees that this time Mr. Matthew Arnold will be heard in every part of the Hall." I gathered that he detested the business of lecturing, and had never dreamt that it would involve him in what the moderns call "publicity." I thought of the lady in "The House of the Seven Gables" who, when reduced to keeping a shop, fled into the back parlour and shut herself in whenever a customer appeared at the counter.

II

During the year 1890 I was going more and more to London, and timing my visits for the great Home Rule debates which were taking place in the House of Commons. I had access to the Lobby and the Gallery, and sat fascinated during the hours when battle raged between Gladstone on the one side and Chamberlain and Balfour on the other, writing, between whiles, leading articles which were telegraphed to Hull. It was about this time that I was introduced to Mr. Gladstone at an evening party at Lord Brassey's in Park Lane. He invited me to sit beside him on a sofa, asked about my paper and my work, said that journalism, and especially provincial journalism, was a great profession, and launched out into a stream of vivid, earnest, and delightfully indiscreet talk. The subject of royal grants was then to the fore and causing a good deal of agitation among Radicals. He asked me whether there was much feeling about it in the North of England. I replied that I thought not, and that the objection came mainly from London Radicals. "Ah," he said, "that is exactly what I should have expected. You see in London they see how the Court stagnates." There followed a warm tribute to the dutifulness of Queen Victoria, but her withdrawal from the ceremonial and decorative side of the functions of the Crown had, he said, inevitably had this result. It seemed to me rather a strange interpretation of the London Radical mind, but it was highly flattering to an unknown young man from Hull to be made the repository of these confidences, and merely to sit by Mr. Gladstone and hear his voice and look into his wonderful face was rapture.*

I was in the Lobby during the autumn session, 1890, and saw at close quarters the unfolding catastrophe of the Parnell divorce. I have spoken of one incident in another book, but perhaps I may repeat it here. A day or two before the crash came, Ned Harrington, one of Parnell's few intimates, walked me into the corridor and told me in a whisper what was coming. I can still mark the place where we were standing when the revelation came. Parnell, he assured me, had told him again and again that he would come through this action with flying colours, and then suddenly, one day when he had gone to him on ordinary party business and had got up to go, Parnell had just turned in his chair and said, "By the way, N., I am not going to defend that action." "My God, sir !" was the answer, and "Pooh !" the cool retort. "It will be a nine days' wonder," said Parnell. "Nine centuries, sir," said the colleague. Parnell seems honestly to have believed that he had only to hold his head high and go straight on for everything to be as before; and his anger, when it turned out otherwise, was terrible to witness. Day by day one saw him striding backward and forward through the Lobby, his hair streaming, his eyes blazing, and a ghastly pallor on his face. Old friends who wished to say a kindly word dared not approach him; the word went out that he would hear nothing except from the few who were prepared to back him to the end. Of all the personal incidents I have witnessed in Parliament, this was by far the most painful, and to this day I see his face exactly as I saw it then, stricken and defiant, blazing with an anger that seemed literally volcanic. Never have I had the sense of a human being so gripped and shaken by passion.

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* I have a memory of another conversation with Mr. Gladstone (at a later date) in which also Queen Victoria came in. He was speaking of the late Lord Salisbury, and after praising his uprightness and conscientiousness, he wound up by saying that the one criticism he had to make of him as Foreign Secretary was that he "did not make enough use of the Court." This led him to enlarge on the extreme value to a Foreign Secretary, who knew how to use it rightly, of Queen Victoria's circle of relationships with foreign sovereigns and their families, and her admirable industry in corresponding with them and conveying to them shades of opinion and feeling which could not be conveyed from Government to Government.

My visits to London at this time were not purely business and political. I had been more and more at a certain house on Campden Hill, and in November, 1890, the event on which my heart had been set since one day in February, 1886, took place, and I became engaged to be married. Mary Rawlinson, the girl I was engaged to, had been a friend of R. L. Stevenson, who was now in Samoa; and within a few weeks there came a letter from him. This has been published in his correspondence, but I may quote his closing sentences :—

> Yes, Skerryvore has passed; it was, for us. But I wish you could see us in our new home on the mountain, in the middle of great woods, and looking far out over the Pacific. When Mr. S. is very rich, he must bring you round the world and let you see it, and see the old gentleman

and the old lady. I mean to live quite a long while yet, and my wife must do the same, or else I couldn't manage it; so, you see, you will have plenty of time; and it's a pity not to see the most beautiful places, and the most beautiful people moving there, and the real stars and moon overhead instead of the tin imitations that preside over London.

Accept the best wishes of your admirer, ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON.*

Unhappily we have not made the voyage to Samoa, and, alas, there is no "old gentleman" at Vailima. But the letters went on during the next six years, and in one of them was a little water-colour drawing of his house at Vailima, done by R.L.S. himself, which now hangs in our library.

I had persuaded my uncle that it would be good for me and good for the paper that I should come up to London for the autumn session of that year, and I tried to be conscientious about that part of my duty. But it was an act of duplicity, and though he was not unkind, my uncle plainly let me know what he thought. In the next few weeks it became evident that we should part. He was not prepared to aid or abet my proceedings, or to take any responsibility for my setting up house at Hull; and it was clear that if I did not now, or early next year, take the plunge and come back to London, I should be in the provinces for the rest of my life, which had never been part of my scheme. I have always regretted that we did not part amicably, but he was aggrieved and I seemed to have no option. I never saw him again after our parting this year, but four years later, a few weeks before he died, I wrote to him and received a kindly and affectionate message in reply. He was a man of tremendous, if rather formidable, convictions, and though difficult for a young man to understand or get on with had well earned the respect in which he was held in Parliament and the London County Council.

In March, 1891, I was again in London without visible means of subsistence, and this time engaged to be married. It seemed incredibly rash, and my family was greatly concerned that I should have thrown up a safe place with a salary that mounted to £400 a year, just to take a perilous chance in London. But this time it was quite different. I had an object in life, and very warm and kind friends in her family. Moreover, John Morley's prescription had really worked.

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* "Letters of Stevenson to His Family and Friends," ii. 227.

The four years in Hull had taught me my business. All manner of things which had been pure abstractions to me four years earlier had become realities. I had seen business men at work, learnt something of the processes of foreign trade, watched a Town Council and its committees, followed the struggles of Dock and Railway Companies into the Law-courts and Committees of the House of Commons, catered for advertisements, bought paper, constructed balance-sheets and done every job in a newspaper office, from that of junior reporter to that of editor and leader-writer. I had no money, but now I felt certain that I could make a living.

III

I had gone from Toynbee Hall to Hull in 1886, and I returned to it in March, 1891, sure of the old welcome from Barnett and his wife. What Barnett was to young men setting out in life can never be told. He never grudged you his time; he never seemed to be bored or tired or superior or condescending. Whatever problem you brought him, whether your private affairs or your tangled thoughts, he gave you the whole of his wise, subtle, and original mind. Again and again when I have been at a loss for ideas or subjects to write about, I have been to Barnett and come away refreshed and encouraged and ready to set to work again. All through the subsequent years till his death, when in any serious perplexity, I went to Barnett or wrote to Barnett, and this without any limitation of the subject of the perplexity. He was as shrewd and wise about a political difficulty as on social questions, and there was no professional journalist or politician who had a keener eye for the characters of public men or the probable consequences of their actions. At Toynbee we called him the "seer," and no one that I have known better deserved the name.

So, with Barnett's encouragement, I once more sat down to write, which is after all the secret of getting on in journalism. The difficulty of the free-lance journalist is the apparent aimlessness of his efforts. He is shooting at a target which is always in the dark, and has to discover by trial and error whether he is hitting or missing. He writes his articles and posts them to editors; a few stick in the target, more come back, and about the rest there is silence. He puzzles in vain to discover why one is accepted and another rejected, and his best efforts seem to be least regarded. This results after a few weeks in dejection and bewilderment which choke off all but the few who must write or perish. I was determined that whatever happened I would go on writing, and I tried to map out the free-lance life with the same precision as work in an office. Thus there were six "Notes" to be written every day and distributed among the papers which I had discovered were taking these things from outside contributors. Then there was one special article a week with which I tried my fortune with the *Pall Mall Gazette* or with my old friend the *Echo*. On top of these a more ambitious article was laid down for a monthly review or magazine, and to this eventually I added a commission from a publisher to write a book on Old Age Pensions, and a little work for a fee in connexion with one of Charles Booth's inquiries.

On these lines I went at it day by day for the next twelve months, and seldom earned less than £7 a week and often as much as £12. If only two of my Notes were accepted in a day, they brought me £5 a week and this was the average I looked for from that source. One great advantage I had; I knew from my office training what *not* to write. I took it for granted that all the obvious subjects would be covered by the staffs, and scoured blue books, consular reports, foreign and provincial newspapers for my material; and Barnett was full of suggestions for special articles. I discovered a cheap market where a good many of my remainders could be planted almost automatically at 2d. a line. I had, of course, anxious times, and in a moment of weakness, I offered myself again to Passmore Edwards, who, as before, instantly engaged me for morning work, and after a few weeks found the same reason to deplore my inefficiency. This time I took the high line and timed my own moment of departure, but not before I had one rather agreeable score off him. Discoursing one day on the shortcomings of my writing, he picked up a *Pall Mall Gazette* and pointing to a certain article in it he begged me to read that and read it carefully, for it was a perfect example of what journalistic writing should be. It was an article of my own.

For a single man living at Toynbee Hall I was doing respectably well, but the regular fixed income in professional journalism which my father-in-law very properly demanded as a condition of marriage, seemed as far off as ever at the beginning of January, 1892. Then suddenly the door opened through the misfortune of another. Edmund Garrett, E. T. Cook's assistant-editor, the most gifted and versatile of the younger journalists then at work in London, suddenly fell ill, and after struggling single-handed for three or four weeks, Cook sent for me. He was pleased to say that my outside contributions had caught his eye from the beginning and he believed me quite capable of the writing part of the job. But what he chiefly wanted was a man who knew the inside of an office and could be left in charge of the paper, without having to be trained to the business. Of the various contributors, some of them very brilliant people, I was the only one who had had this particular experience, and so he had turned to me (John Morley's advice justified again). I was to understand, however, that if Garrett came back, he would be assistant-editor, though in all probability another place would be found for me.

If there was one place in the world I should have chosen at that moment it was this. The *Pall Mall* had enormous prestige in my own thoughts; I had read it as a boy when Greenwood was editing it and my father had it delivered at his house at Bath; I had taken it as an undergraduate, and hung on its word when Morley was editor. I had followed it (with some revolts) through the resounding years of Stead's reign; with Cook as editor, it seemed to be gaining a new reputation for cool and wise steering without any loss of its high literary standard. To be a member of its staff was not only to have assured bread and butter and security of tenure, but the place which of all others had been most envied by the young Oxford men of my own time who had dreamt of journalism. It was sad that Garrett's misfortune should be my opportunity, but I knew him only slightly in those days and for me the place was port after storm and at last brought marriage in sight.

IV

Garrett did not return, but went a few months later to South Africa to edit the *Cape Times*, where he played a great and conspicuous part in the years that followed. I was accordingly appointed assistant-editor at the beginning of June, 1892, and was married from Hill Lodge, Campden Hill, at the end of July. My father-in-law had given us a house, No. 29 Cheyne Walk, in which we were to live, and to that we returned at the beginning of September, when I was due to take charge of the *Pall Mall*, while Cook went away for six weeks. I was inwardly rather frightened at being left alone with an important London paper at a critical moment in public affairs. A General Election had lately taken place, and left a precarious situation for the new Government, which was dependent on the Irish vote, and even so had a majority of only forty. Mr. Gladstone was on the spot; Ministers were busy in their offices, and very important decisions were being taken in which Liberal politicians looked specially to the *Pall Mall* for guidance. I asked myself all the questions which the amateur commonly puts to the journalist. Should I be able to write the leading article and three "Occasional Notes," which was my portion, in the something less than two hours which was the utmost limit of time? Should I think of subjects? Should I make some *gaffe* which would expose me to ridicule and end my career? The leading article on the front page in large pica was horribly conspicuous, and its readers, as I knew, included the most critical, fastidious, and exacting people in the country.

For a few days I suffered from stage-fright and sat up to the small hours writing articles to serve me as a last resort, if I broke down the next morning. After a week I discovered to my great relief that I had never once used these midnight concoctions. The morning always brought new and better thoughts and, under pressure, the time was sufficient. After that I enjoyed myself hugely. Eminent people who were only names to me came to call at the office and I talked with them face to face. Twice Mr. Gladstone sent communications with his own hand, slightly menacing, but rather flattering. "Mr. Gladstone would like the editor of the *Pall Mall Gazette* to know, etc.," Then one Sunday the proprietor invited myself and my wife down to the country and warmly congratulated me on my performances. He said he had been afraid that if Cook went into Parliament, as then seemed not improbable, he should have a difficulty in finding a successor to him, but now his mind was at ease.

Then suddenly, towards the end of September, Cook came rushing back from Italy a fortnight before his time, and his first words to me were, "The paper is sold." It seemed incredible, but it was true, and a fortnight later we were all in the street. It was impossible to discover who was the buyer, but other papers reported that he was the proprietor of a well-known temperance beverage, and on that supposition we dealt with the solicitor who acted as intermediary. He offered us all re-engagements, but we wished to know the name of our new master, and it could not be ascertained. Then we asked whether the politics of the paper were to be changed, and upon that the intermediary said he had no instructions. By this time it was common rumour that the purchaser, whoever he might be, intended to convert the paper into a Conservative organ, whereupon we asked for an assurance that the politics would not be changed, and, when that was refused, every member of the staff who was concerned with politics declined to renew his engagement.

There was nothing else to do, and no political journalist of the old school who took himself seriously would have dreamt of doing anything else. All the same it was a grim moment. Most of us had nothing in the world but six months' salary from the old proprietor in lieu of notice, and I had married a wife and settled down to keep house. My wife had even less doubt than I had; she was prepared for everything, and her parents, though a little impressed by the vicissitudes of my extraordinary profession—which they had been observing for the last six years—overflowed with kindness and comfort. So I started out once more to pick up my free-lance connexions and gathered a great deal of sympathy and many promises to "consider my work" when opportunity offered. With a house of our own a livelihood still seemed possible, and there was a partner to share whatever came. But during the next months we pondered a good deal over the difference between chance earnings and a monthly cheque coming steadily in, and it was an enormous relief when George Newnes, whom, till that moment, none of us had thought of, came on the scene offering to start a new Liberal evening paper and take on the whole ejected staff of the old *Pall Mall Gazette*.

CHAPTER V

FIRST YEARS AT THE *WESTMINSTER*

E. T. Cook as Editor—Other Friends—The Government of 1892—Rosebery and Harcourt—Rosebery in Office—Literary Diversions—"The Philistine's" Attack—The Hunting of Jabez Balfour—A Lost Manuscript.

I

THE preceding chapters are all I have to tell of the vicissitudes of journalism. For the next thirty years I sat in an office, and drew my monthly salary with perfect regularity. Proprietors changed, but from all of them alike I received nothing but courtesy and consideration, support and freedom. In the whole period I cannot recall a stormy moment or an interview with any one of them in which blame was imputed to me, often as I deserved it. Let me say a word first about George Newnes, whom I shall always remember with gratitude. He was one of the pioneers of the new reading for the multitude, and may even be called the father and founder of them all. But he had strong political convictions and a very real respect for the serious kind of journalism. When he started the *Westminster* it was freely predicted that he would want to make it a "daily *Tit-Bits*." Nothing was farther from his thoughts. He wished the *Westminster* to be a lively paper, but in its own way; and though he was fertile in suggestions, he never pressed any of them on an unwilling editor. It was his idea that the *Westminster* should be printed on green paper, and on the whole it was a very good idea. It was not his idea, it was Cook's and Charles Morley's, that ladies dressed in crinolines should be employed to advertise the paper on its first day, and it was more a disappointment to us than to him that our sedate readers were not amused. Being a very genial man, he was a little frightened by Cook, who held strong views about the relations of editors and proprietors, and was firm on the point that a proprietor should not walk into an editor's room unannounced. Newnes asked me once in later days whether Cook had ever been known to smile, and though he had a very sincere regard for him, he said when I became editor that he hoped I might find his company a little more congenial than it seemed to be to my predecessor.

E. T. Cook was the most efficient and methodical editor of his time. If he worked his staff hard, he was unsparing of himself. He was at work all the morning and most of the afternoon, and, except when he was dining out, all the evening at home. He had a mind in which everything seemed to be indexed and was instantly available, whenever it was wanted. For the office he invented a system of what he called "clag-books" (the origin of the name I never could discover), in which clippings from all sorts of newspapers and periodicals about persons and things were daily posted. In addition, he had his own private "clag"—clippings made with his own hand and stored in envelopes which he kept at home. Finally, as his biographer, Saxon Mills, has recorded, he kept a diary, which if published in full, as it should be some day, ought to be one of the most intimate records of this time. On all this side of him he was the perfect machine. He was never flustered, never late, and wholly free from the uncertainties, irregularities, and lapses from the normal which commonly afflict the writing tribe. Also he had an extraordinary gift of silence. Members of the staff would go in to interview him and come out reporting that in a quarter of an hour he had done nothing but nod his head and say yes or no. All this at first was rather frightening, and against his silence even the moderate talker felt garrulous. But gradually one discovered that these were only the mannerisms of a rather shy man. After a few weeks the reserve broke, and he was no longer the editor giving orders, but a kind and warm-hearted friend whose talk was free and witty, and whose interests ranged over a wide field in spite of his methodical way of bringing them all under discipline.

During the years I worked with Cook our co-operation was so timed and dovetailed that we often wrote the leader in two parts, one assigned to him and one to me, and contrived under pressure to produce it in twenty-five minutes. I have never been able to manage this with any other writer, but with Cook it was easy, and I learnt from him to keep exactly within bounds. Of all the journalists of this time he was easily the most skilful in controversy, and to join issue with him was a dangerous adventure for the oldest hands. He was prompt in verbal retort; he knew everything that his opponent had said or done in the past, he had the editor's privilege—and used it very deftly—of closing the argument when he had said his last word. It is a perpetual astonishment to journalists that public men can be induced to take on the odds of battle with newspapers; and if any of them could have seen Cook at work on this part of his job, it would, I think, have been a life-long deterrent to them. No one was a more perfect master of editorial sniping, or of the damning "tail" between brackets in which an opponent, after being finally scored off, is informed that "this correspondence must now cease."

My next door neighbour in Chelsea during these years was Arthur Acland, an old friend, who had been specially kind to me at Oxford, and who was now Minister of Education, or Vice-President of the Council, as the holder of this office was then called, in Mr. Gladstone's last Cabinet. He was a man of strong, quiet influence which was steadily exerted to keep his colleagues on the road of social reform; and apart from his zeal in his own special subject of education he was active behind the scenes in all branches of politics during these years. I had corresponded with him regularly while I was in Hull, and now in London I saw him generally on three days in the week, and nearly always on Sundays. He was scrupulous about Cabinet secrecy, but talking with him kept me in touch with the inner currents and gave me a vision of politics from the inside which was invaluable to the journalist. Another intimate Oxford friend was Tom Ellis of beloved memory, then a Junior Whip and afterwards Chief Whip, who made me known to young men in the House of Commons and was always at hand for the intimate talk which is so much more than the communications of the politician to the journalist. Then, again, there was Marjoribanks, the Chief Whip, afterwards Lord Tweedmouth, reputed in those days to be the best Chief Whip that ever lived, and through Acland's influence I could go to him at any time and enjoy the sense of being taken into his complete confidence. Behind them all was the great Olympian in Downing Street, heroically struggling and visibly sinking under a load of accumulating trouble. Him I saw occasionally, and I always bore away the same ineffaceable impression of august and patient old age; but questions to him were generally conveyed through Sir Algernon West and I waited in an outer room for the answer.

II

It seems a miracle, as one looks back on it, that the Government of 1892 should have survived for three years. Its chief task, the passing of the Home Rule Bill, was foredoomed to failure; during the second half of its existence it could never reckon on a majority of more than 20; it was rent internally by the personal rivalries which the departure of Mr. Gladstone precipitated. Yet never in the subsequent years can I remember such discipline as was imposed on and cheerfully accepted by the rank and file of M.P.s at this period. They lived in the House of Commons, attended every division, and never grumbled or threatened. Yet one heard perpetually of the troubles within, of the "dreadful day" which Mr. Gladstone had had with Queen Victoria, of Harcourt's rising tempers, of the struggles in the Cabinet over this or that detail in the Home Rule Bill, of the incessant battles over Estimates. Seeing politics at close quarters for the first time, I thought them a dreadfully quarrelsome business, but I could not doubt that, from Mr. Gladstone downwards, all were in deadly earnest, and that everybody was opposing everybody else from the highest sense of duty.

Vividly do I remember the weeks in February and March, 1894, when Rosebery was chosen to succeed Gladstone as Prime Minister. There never was any doubt of the result, *provided that the Queen sent for Rosebery.* The proviso is necessary, for if there is anything that a journalist learns to mistrust, it is the vows of politicians that they will not serve under this or that man as Prime Minister. The vows were certainly loud and deep as regards Harcourt, in 1894, but there was no political reason known to the public which would have justified a refusal to serve under him in the eyes of the Liberal party, and the personal reasons were not such as could have conveniently been explained on a platform. What decided that matter was that Rosebery, and not Harcourt, was given the opportunity and that the objections to Harcourt were strong enough to make the whole Cabinet acquiesce.

I received great kindness from Harcourt in later years and came to the conclusion, which is more than borne out in Gardiner's biography, that his overbearing manner masked a friendly and simple disposition. Campbell-Bannerman used to say that the first qualification of a Liberal leader was "not to be rattled by the Nymph"—the "Nymph of Malwood" being his playful designation of his formidable colleague. And C. B., I am sure, would have served under him and laughed at him. The trouble was that so few people ventured to laugh at him and that he was so entirely unconscious of the wounds that he inflicted. I remember once saying to Morley that he was exceptionally happy in his relations with Harcourt. "Ah," was the reply, "I wonder if you would say so, if you saw the letters in that drawer (pointing to a drawer below his bookshelves), letters abusing me like a pickpocket. *He* has forgotten all about them, but I can't quite." There was scarcely one of his colleagues who hadn't had a letter from Harcourt which he had forgotten as soon as he had written it, but which they remembered. As Chancellor of the Exchequer, he made his handwriting a terror. Strong men and Ministers of State quailed at seeing it on an envelope. In his consuming zeal for economy, he rated them in language which a headmaster would scarcely have used to a schoolboy, and it never occurred to him that any of them would resent it. They did resent it, and when the critical moment came, in 1894, they asked themselves if he was like that as Chancellor of the Exchequer, what would he be like as Prime Minister? The Queen's choice of Rosebery enabled them to leave the question unanswered.

With all his truculence, as one is obliged to call it, Harcourt was entirely devoted to Liberal principles as he understood them, especially to the peace and retrenchment doctrine of the Manchester school. He regarded the fighting services as the leeches of the Exchequer, and waged an incessant war on them. With his qualities and disqualifications, he was a towering personality, and it was impossible not to respect him for his complete disrespect of persons in the pursuit of his cherished causes. He never curried favour with any of the men whose vote and influence had to be won, if he was to rise to the highest place; he fought them all impartially in defence of the public purse; he cared nothing for the great and wealthy, or for the approval of the society into which he was born. The last time I saw him he said that he was the only economist left alive, and he seemed happy and content and at peace with the world.

The true criticism of Harcourt at this time is that he ought either not to have joined the Rosebery Government or to have buried his quarrel with Rosebery. He did neither; he went on and pursued the quarrel, and not seldom acted as if Rosebery did not exist. In this he was joined by Morley, who had probably had more influence than any other member of the Cabinet in making Rosebery Prime Minister, but was deeply mortified at being sent back to Ireland when he hoped or expected to be Foreign Secretary. For fighting purposes Harcourt held all the cards in the new Administration, and his death-duty Budget—the high-water mark of Radical finance up to that moment—of which Rosebery was a severe critic, gave him an ascendency in the House of Commons which could not be challenged from the House of Lords. To Rosebery, his year as Prime Minister was a prolonged Purgatory, breaking health, spoiling sleep, and involving him at the end of it in the catastrophe that was inevitable before he took office. He came out of it like a burnt child dreading the fire, and resolved never to take office again under like conditions or under any conditions which did not promise success and prosperity. It was a disaster to him to have had the prize so early and to have had so little satisfaction out of it. The ambition of being Prime Minister for the sake of being it was gratified on far too easy terms, and ceased to be a motive. In its place came a determination to exact his own terms—which required submissions and adjustments by other people that were impossible in the world of practical politics. One of his conditions has been confirmed by subsequent experience. It is, as he used to say, "impossible to be a Peer Premier unless you have a twin to lead in the House of Commons."

III

I was Jack-of-all-trades as well as assistant-editor and leader-writer from 1893 to 1896. I reviewed five or six novels a week and a good many other books besides. I was also art critic and contrived to make a little splash in that capacity. The impressionist art critics, who were then in possession of the field, railed at me as an amateur and an interloper, and I replied with a series of articles, written by "The Philistine," in which I arraigned the whole tribe of critics, artistic and literary, for their sectarianism and log-rolling and excessive laudation of the last new thing. This I followed up with an attack on a certain school of novelists for their exploitation of the decadent and the sexual. The whole was published in a pamphlet in a flaming red cover embellished with a vigorous drawing of a frantic young woman by Mr. Arthur Rackham. It is forgotten now, and I should be the last to wish to revive it, but at the time it made a fine uproar, and for weeks together drew a stream of letters from the old writers and the new; the conservative critics and the innovators; the pioneers of the 'nineties and their publishers and other publishers. As the controversy proceeded, the literary and the artistic issues got hopelessly confused, and art critics who, in spite of their advanced ideas about the handling of paint, were irreproachable family men, complained bitterly of being mixed up with the exploiters of the new fiction. At that point we thought it better to stop, for tempers were greatly inflamed, and our correspondents were beginning to say outrageous things about each other.

This controversy has a modest place in the literary history of the 'nineties. John Lane told me in after years that it had killed the *Yellow Book* and spoilt the sales of some of his favourite writers. One of these retorted that I was a "literary homicide," and predicted that my "howls of torment" would be the "clarion of his fame." I was also told that "I was bludgeoning down and taking the bread from the mouths" of "*les jeunes* of the nineteenth-century-end Renaissance." My only thought at the time was that the attack would have the opposite result of giving a wide advertisement to the books chosen as examples, and I honestly tried to do scrupulous justice to the very real talents of certain of the authors I attacked. I cannot think any harm was done. Time has justified most of the protest against the excessive laudation and reckless promises of immortality which the critics showered upon the second-rate; and even the best critical judgment is liable to such obsessions and aberrations that a periodical shake-up is good for the soul of the critic. There was in those days a sort of assumption that because Keats had been killed by a *Quarterly* reviewer, every third-rate writer who was slaughtered by a critic was a budding Keats. There is unfortunately what logicians call an undistributed middle in this proposition, but as an editor in after days, I thought it better to give the critic a licence in eulogy on the chance of his discovering one Keats than to run the risk of killing a Keats in an indiscriminate slaughter of impostors. Not infrequently, in returning a proof to a reviewer, I have asked him to consider whether, in the light of some acknowledged masterpiece of the same kind, his laudation of a particular book was really justified, but if he has assured me that this was his considered opinion, I have never objected.

One other activity of these times I look back upon with less satisfaction. These were the days of the great Liberator smash, and Jabez Balfour, the head of that institution, a prominent Nonconformist and former Liberal member of Parliament, had departed to South America in highly ambiguous circumstances. There he seemed likely to remain for all the evidence there was of any official endeavour to bring him back. We of the *Westminster* thought it would be seriously damaging to the Government if the matter remained thus, and Cook suggested to me that I should work up the case. I set to work with the aid of the Assistant Official Receiver in Bankruptcy, and after many laborious days produced a series of articles analysing the transactions of the Liberator and its associated companies and dissecting their balance-sheets. This, too, after its appearance in the paper, was circulated as a pamphlet and had a wide sale. With an angry opinion demanding justice, Balfour was brought back on an extradition warrant and put on his trial and convicted. Then to my dismay the Judge sentenced him to fourteen years' penal servitude. His offence was undoubted, and he had greatly aggravated it by the circumstances of his flight. But he was by no means a common thief; his companies were originally sound ones with good and genuine schemes; and his transactions, though fraudulent, were for the most part desperate flounderings in the hope of covering up temporary embarrassments due to trade conditions. Many ramps of later days in which the operators have not only not been found out but received high recognition have been vastly more criminal. It had never occurred to me that Balfour could get more than three years' penal servitude, and had I foreseen the end I would never have touched the case. The idea that I had contributed to this excess of justice lay heavily on my mind for many years, and I was not comforted when Lord Justice Vaughan Williams used to descant on the iniquity of this sentence and urge me to take it as a warning against hunting criminals in newspapers. He seemed to think that few of his brothers on the bench could be trusted, in any case that had become notorious, not to pile up a sentence in deference to an excited opinion.

During the last of these years I was endeavouring to write a book planned on an ambitious scale to take all my leisure for a long time ahead. It was to explore the state of England from the time of Arthur Young down to the middle of the nineteenth century with a careful examination of the Enclosure Acts, the growth and movements of populations, the Corn Laws, the old Poor Law and the new, and the influence on legislation and policy of the theorists of the period: Adam Smith, Bentham, Malthus, James Mill, etc. Dr. Gilbert Slater helped me, and with the material he accumulated he was able to produce the first authoritative study of the Enclosure Acts, and was justly rewarded with a Doctorate of the University of London. I, too, accumulated a mountain of material, and my wife worked hard in sorting and tabulating it. After much preparation I wrote about 300 pages, but the manuscript was lost in house-moving, and I never had the courage to start again. This study was then virgin soil, but so many others, and especially Mr. and Mrs. J. L. Hammond, have cultivated it with such admirable results in subsequent years, that there is nothing to regret. Still, the loss of a manuscript is always at the time a minor tragedy, and for years I cherished the hope that it might turn up.

CHAPTER VI

EDITING THE *WESTMINSTER*

Appointment as Editor—F. C. Gould and Charles Geake—Lord Rosebery and the *Westminster*—Difficulties of the Liberal Party—Sir William Harcourt and the Leadership—Imperialism and Pacifism—The Limits of Pacifism—The Retired Leader Problem—The Coming of C. B.—A Compliment and Its Acceptance—John Morley's Position—Association with Morley—His View of Journalists in Public Affairs—A Meeting with Chamberlain.

I

EARLY in December, 1895, Cook told me that he had been offered the editorship of the *Daily News*, and had decided to take it. A day or two later, a paragraph appeared in the morning papers announcing his departure from the *Westminster*, and adding that Sir George Newnes now had the editorship of the paper at his disposal. Cook told me that he had strongly advised Newnes to appoint me as his successor, but Newnes very naturally wished to explore the field before making up his mind. Very distinguished men, including several members of Parliament, applied for the place, and for several days he was busy interviewing them in his office, in Southampton Street. I waited in some trepidation, expecting any day to hear that the appointment had been made. Then one morning he sent for me, and after reminding me quite genially of my comparative youth (I was then not quite thirty-three) announced that he had decided to give me the chance. He said he had inquired into my work and found that I had done a good many things besides politics, and advised me not to lean too heavily on to the political articles, but to give variety and brightness to the paper. I hope I did not mislead him in promising to do my best, but it was never in my mind that the *Westminster* could be anything but a political paper, and I knew that its appeal on other grounds must be limited by the fact that it was a serious political paper, expounding Liberal ideas.

There remained to fill my own place of assistant-editor, and upon that Newnes made the original, and to me entirely welcome, suggestion that F. C. Gould, whose fame as a cartoonist had been growing every week since the *Westminster* started, should be given this appointment. I was devoted to Gould, I knew him to be a capable and keen politician, whose advice was worth seeking; and to have him in the office would enable us to keep in step with leader and cartoon. Thus began a partnership which lasted without a break till the beginning of the Great War, and grew more intimate as the years went on. The third appointment, that of assistant leader-writer, was left to me, and without hesitation, I asked for Charles Geake, then in charge of the Liberal Publication Department, but with a certain amount of spare time in the mornings which he was at liberty to employ in the *Westminster* office. Geake was a distinguished Cambridge mathematician and a former Fellow of Clare College, and he brought an acute mathematical intelligence to the study of politics. His mind was stored with the past speeches of public men, and he was a positive genius at the deadly parallel. There was no moment when he could not rake some pearl from this dust-heap, and what I owe him for saving me the labour of this necessary but dreary research is more than I can acknowledge. In his contributions to *Westminster* "Notes" he supplied a whole generation of Liberal politicians with ammunition for the platform, and made himself a wholesome terror to the other side. Like many mathematicians, he had a neat faculty for light verse and peppered his page with rhyming impromptus which, for a reason I never could ascertain, he signed L. E. C. The rest of the staff were the old guard from the *Pall Mall*, and nearly all were with me during the twenty-six years of my editorship. Some time before this my brother Harold had passed to the *Daily Chronicle*, but my youngest brother, Hugh, had begun to write for the *Westminster*, and continued to do a large part of its Parliamentary work for the whole period of my editorship and later.

I had made the acquaintance of Lord Rosebery in October, 1895, and after my appointment as editor of the *Westminster* he treated me with great kindness and confidence. The relations of public men and journalists are liable to the suspicion of motive on both sides, but Lord Rosebery was as nearly perfect in that relation as any public man I was ever thrown in with. In the eleven years from this time onwards I was much in his always delightful society, but he never asked me to do him a service as a journalist, and never resented my criticisms, which were frequent and outspoken during a considerable part of this time. He was supposed to be sensitive to newspaper criticism, but if so, he concealed it with admirable fortitude, so far as I was concerned. The charm of being in his company was that he was so much more than a politician. He ranged over all subjects, books, history, art, life, and the simplest of human things, and to all he brought a delicate play of wit and irony. I have never known anyone whose talk was so finished and clean-cut and yet so spontaneous. His epigrams came to him on the spur of the moment, and were hardly ever repeated. He was entirely without the tiresome habit of hugging his own good things, and had the perfect courtesy which knows how to follow, instead of dominating the stream of talk. With all his brilliance he scarcely ever said anything malicious, even about people who were unfriendly to him, and was impatient of the slightest disparagement of anyone whom he counted a friend. Any hint of inadequacy in anyone whom he really liked put him instantly on the defensive, and sometimes brought a reminder that he owed the person criticized too much to be able to see his faults.

The days which my wife and I during the next fifteen years spent at Mentmore, the Durdans, and Dalmeny, were among the happiest in our lives, and among the hours which I should most like to live over again are those spent in walks and talks with Rosebery, which were of weekly occurrence during the summer months in London. He gave me always of his best, and to a man writing daily on public affairs he was a perpetual stimulus. I never came away from him without feeling intellectually refreshed, or having got some idea which helped and illuminated. Often he suggested a Gould cartoon;

sometimes a point for a leader, and whenever foreign affairs were urgent he was ready to help with the whole of his experience and diplomatic knowledge. In all this he had a largeness of mind and a detachment from the ordinary party point of view which made him unique among politicians and extraordinarily sympathetic to a writer. Through all the vicissitudes of after years, this spell remained, and whatever befell, one could always escape with him into a world unspoilt by politics.

I could never at any time forget my debt to Lord Rosebery for his help and kindness, but when it came to practical politics, there was disappointment all the way. It seemed intolerable that such gifts, such influence as he had with the multitude of thinking people, should go to waste for lack of some means of fitting them into the political scheme; yet he himself seemed deliberately to thwart every effort to make a place for him. When he spoke of himself as ploughing a lonely furrow he was really describing his own process, and in so doing shutting the door on himself. He was too much Rosebery to be even a Roseberian, and when his group had laid their plans, he would often cut across them with an intervention of his own which reduced them to confusion. The stars seemed to be fighting for him after the famous Chesterfield speech, but he took the favouring horoscope and slashed it to pieces with his own hand. He was the most uninfluenceable of men. Time after time I have left him thinking that possibly I had made some impression on him, only to discover a few days later that he had done the one thing that I had urged him most strongly not to do. Then I would lose my patience and fling out at him in the *Westminster*, but it made no difference. He would ask me to come again, smile at my disappointment and displeasure, and be his old charming self, talking of Napoleon and Pitt and Horace Walpole, and telling stories of "Dizzy" and Mr. Gladstone.

II

But to return to 1896. The Liberal party was in an extraordinary plight at the beginning of this year. It had suffered a crushing defeat at the polls, and seemed hopelessly committed to the failing cause of Home Rule. The illustrious retired leader sat at Hawarden, and though he announced himself a "person politically dead" his interventions were frequent and highly inconvenient to the leader in being. His shadow falling across the scene caused a constant unrest among the faithful rank and file who compared the lesser deities with the great Olympian. There was trouble among the lesser deities which with great difficulty was prevented from becoming scandal. Communications were completely broken between the leader of the party and his principal spokesman in the Commons, and the ex-Cabinet was in a puzzle how to meet and how to find a plausible excuse for not meeting. I had watched it boiling up to this point for the past two years, and was on civil terms with both groups, but it was soon evident to me that something must break. Either Rosebery or Harcourt must give way or the ruin would be irretrievable. Even the cheerful Tom Ellis, who worked heroically to keep the ship afloat, was driven to this conclusion. Harcourt never had any intention of yielding and, being leader in the House of Commons, held all the cards against Rosebery, who could do nothing but watch a situation beyond his control. So when Rosebery announced at the beginning of October that he was about to resign, his best friends could not have advised him to do otherwise. But this was only the beginning of new trouble. For Rosebery, as soon appeared, had a strong body of sympathizers who were by no means ready to give his rival an unqualified allegiance. Harcourt was rather sharply reminded that he was still only leader in the Commons, and that Rosebery's withdrawal created no vacancy except that of leadership in the Lords, to which Kimberley was appointed. It was in these days that the theory was thrown up that, failing an ex-Prime Minister of a Liberal Government, there was no such person as "leader of the Liberal party" and no authority in existence which had the right of nominating any man, however eminent, as future Prime Minister, if and when the party returned to power.

This undoubtedly was sound doctrine, but the perpetual stressing of it after Harcourt was in solitary possession would have been galling to a more angelic temper than his. The strife continued unabated during the next two years, and out of it grew the sharp division between Imperialists and Little Englanders—a revival of the old Palmerstonian quarrel with the Manchester school—which governed Liberal politics till the Free Trade issue came up. I felt that it was unduly embittered by personal antagonisms which could not be explained to the public, and saw in the habit of seizing on points of difference which was common to both sections, something more than a zeal for the Empire on the one side and for the sacred cause of Peace and Retrenchment on the other. Remonstrances behind the scenes with eminent and elderly people went hand in hand with scoldings and rebukes in the newspaper which were naturally resented by the people concerned. Who was I, an unknown young man, to give myself these airs? The *Westminster* rapidly became an object of suspicion in both camps, and was assailed by each in turn as having no principles which it was not willing to sacrifice on the altar of a fictitious party unity.

Nevertheless, I remained on the best personal terms with both groups. Many years later his son showed me a letter which Harcourt had written describing a meeting with my wife and myself just at this time, and its friendly language seemed like coals of fire. Left to himself, I doubt whether Harcourt would have pursued these quarrels for long. His tempers were spasmodic, and he generally recovered his good humour when the "gales from the south-west" as C. B. used to call them, had blown themselves out. But behind him were men who were much more Harcourtian than Harcourt, and they were determined that he should fight to the end. The same must be said of Rosebery and the Roseberians. He was by no means the high flying Imperialist that his friends loved to paint him. The note of commercial imperialism which was being struck at the Colonial Office was as repugnant to him as to Harcourt, and there was no more merciless critic of what was called "the new diplomacy." At all times that I have known him, his outlook on foreign affairs was cautious and sober, and he was one of the very few men who seemed to be conscious of the dangers gathering in Europe and of the enormous difficulty of adjusting British policy to either of the dominant alliances. If one chose him as a guide rather than

Harcourt or Morley, it was that he seemed to have this European outlook and they seemed to be without it. In these years pacifism and anti-pacifism was certainly not the issue between the two groups. At any time the "little Englanders" could be rallied to a line of policy on Armenian massacres or other Turkish atrocities which seemed to lead straight to a war that might have involved all the European Powers. The end, being humanitarian and idealistic, was to be pursued without fear or flinching, and God would defend the right. Rosebery's quarrel with these people was quite as much that he poured water into this wine as that he waved the flag unduly on other issues. When he resigned, in October, 1896, it was ostensibly because Mr. Gladstone in his retirement had urged a policy in regard to the Armenian massacres which in his view was likely to have consequences that were too dangerous for this country to face single-handed.

For each leader in turn during these years the most anxious problem was how to deal with his predecessor. Though a leader retired, he never would go, and his presence on the scene as a free-lance declining all discipline caused unending perplexity. Willingly or unwillingly, the retired Lord Rosebery played the same part from 1896 to 1906 as the retired Mr. Gladstone from 1894 to 1898, and from 1898 till his death in 1904 the retired Sir William Harcourt made a similar complication for his successor. Rosebery in his "lonely furrow" drew a good half of the rank and file from Harcourt while he was leader; Harcourt and Rosebery, or, if not they, their respective friends and supporters, fought for the allegiance of both halves over the head of C. B., officially appointed to succeed them. There seemed to be no solution of the problem, as Rosebery said one day, except the lethal chamber. By the year 1898 all the old guard of the party had slain each other, so far as their leadership was concerned, and the clans which had gathered about them seemed determined to carry on their feuds.

III

Then began the history of C. B. No one, until this moment, had thought of Campbell-Bannerman, and within the circle all eyes were turned upon Asquith. A few days after Harcourt's resignation in 1898 I had a talk with Tweedmouth, who told me that it was as far as possible settled that Asquith should succeed. But, he said, there was one man, Campbell-Bannerman, who was far his senior, and the "ex-Cab." had come to the conclusion that as a matter of politeness he should be given the option. So a mission had gone or was going to Scotland to lay the case before him, but it was generally expected that he would decline. For though everyone esteemed him, and liked him, he was a man of easy-going disposition who was not at all likely to throw himself upon this bed of thorns; and moreover, he had explained over and over again that his wife's health and his own imperatively required that he should be excused from Parliament some weeks before the end of the session, and this, of course, would be impossible if he became leader. So on the whole I might assume that the offer to C. B. was an amiable formality, and fix my eye on Asquith.

It was, therefore, a surprise—I will not say an unwelcome one—when the messenger returned from Scotland to say that C. B. was taking time to consider the matter. Asquith himself, who never at any moment strove for any prize, had written to urge C. B. to accept; Rosebery, when sounded had been friendly, though warning; and, though Harcourt had not been consulted, C. B. had remained on amicable terms with him through all the distresses of the past years, and his comparative benevolence was assumed. As I read C. B.'s character, there never was any serious doubt that, if the place was offered to him, he would accept it. Though of an easy-going exterior, he had exactly the kind of ambition which likes to prove itself above the current estimate, and he was in reality the last man to object to a task because it seemed disagreeable and difficult. The health obstacles were far more serious than was at all realized at the time, for his wife was suffering from an incurable malady, and he had the seeds of the heart trouble which ended his life ten years later. But I imagine that he looked the probable consequences in the face, and was not merely, as some people thought, brushing aside the valetudinarian excuses hitherto made for an easy existence.

Among other things C. B.'s appointment closed whatever ambitions John Morley may have entertained—and at one time they were very serious ambitions—to lead the Liberal party. In the correspondence between the two men published on the day of Harcourt's resignation, Morley had seemed not only to approve of Harcourt's decision, but to associate himself with Harcourt in the act of resignation from the "councils of the party." Morley, nevertheless, had not foreseen that his colleagues would so interpret his part in it, and when I saw him after C. B.'s appointment, he complained that he had not been consulted in the choice of Harcourt's successor. Looking closely at the letter in which he expressed his complete approval of Harcourt's decision, one perceives that it might have been construed as an expression of opinion which left his own position unprejudiced. But it certainly never occurred to his colleagues that it was so meant, and they were absolutely honest in believing that he too intended to dissociate himself from them. A month later Morley himself closed the door in a speech to his constituents, of whom "he asked leave no longer to take an active and responsible part in the formal councils of the heads of the Liberal party;" but my impression both then and later was that he had by no means intended to cut himself off from this tabernacle. Whether, if he had been consulted, he would have accepted the plea of seniority as a good reason for preferring C. B. to other claimants is a different question, and possibly it was fortunate for his colleagues that the question had not to be put. For several years later he used to speak of C. B. as "that worthy man," and C. B. spoke of him as "Priscilla."

Attendance at or absence from the Shadow Cabinet of the Liberal party made very little difference in those days, and Morley, whose activities were mainly outside the House, went on very much as before, making the platform speeches for which he was always in great demand, and working industriously at his Life of Gladstone. He, too, was one of the methodical literary men, with books and papers in apple-pie order, and it was a pleasure to see his lay-out of his *magnum opus*, and to hear his talk on knotty points as it went forward. When a speech was pending, I often got a summons to Elm Park Gardens, sometimes by telegram, "Pray come and bring me fodder, any time up to midnight," and I have spent many hours in hunting up the required facts and getting them concisely on paper. These were the days of Far-Eastern adventures—the Czar's grab of Port Arthur, the Kaiser's swoop on Kiao-Chow, and our compensating adventure at Wei-hai-Wei—and Morley professed both a bland ignorance and a great desire to be informed about these Chinese events. I did my best and helped to clear my own thoughts by talk with him.

All this was a pleasure, for personal association with Morley in any capacity was delightful. His voice was fascinating; his manner exquisitely polite; he treated the "striplings," as he called us younger men, as if we were his equals in age and authority. Early in the day he peremptorily told me to drop the "Mister," either in writing or talk, and though my pen consented, my tongue used to halt, so that I could never call him by his name. He was affectionate and kindly; took an interest in all one's minor pursuits, and was full of warning against too much work and burning the candle at both ends. Yet there were long periods in which the *Westminster* and its editor were a chronic irritant to him, and though he was always friendly to my face, he spoke and wrote his mind very freely to other people, some of whom were obliging enough to pass on his observations and even his letters to me. These were more medicinal than flattering, but knowing the vehemence and transience of his moods, and the provocation I had offered, I could not take offence. Sometimes in these days the peace was made by Charles Morley, his nephew, who had been with him at the *Pall Mall Gazette*, and was now working for the *Westminster*. Charles was a very gifted and original man who loved all queer characters, and especially tramps and burglars, about whom he wrote with rare knowledge and sympathy. He was, I think, a little oppressed by being the nephew of his uncle, whom he thought a formidable man when crossed, but he studied him carefully and interpreted him charitably, and gave me friendly warnings when there was wrath at Elm Park Gardens, or something written in the *Westminster* had caused indigestion. More than once I tried to induce him to write a character sketch of his uncle, but he never would touch it. And yet, I think, a portrait of John Morley by Charles Morley would have been one of the most interesting documents that could have been left to posterity.

One thing, I own, did rather surprise me, considering Morley's own history, and that was his constant assertion that journalists and writers were out of place in practical affairs. He did not apply the maxim to himself, but no one was stricter about the necessity of keeping all other journalists within their own territory. It happened during my period at the *Westminster* that I was once or twice considered a possible candidate for an administrative position. I knew nothing of it myself, and I never had any serious thought of doing anything but what I was doing. But Morley, as I learnt afterwards, had been strong in protest, not for any personal unfriendliness to myself, but on the general ground that it was improper to promote journalists to these positions, and that their training and habit of mind rendered them unfit for dealing with important affairs in an impartial spirit. So exhausting did he consider the profession of journalism that in the year 1906—when I was less than 44 years old—he thought my abilities too blunted by hard use to be of service to the State. I am sure he was honest in all this, for I was in specially intimate relations with him at this time, and was spending many hours on administrative problems on which he took me into his confidence, as Secretary of State for India. Certainly, if that was the impression I left on him, he was right to say so, but it struck me afterwards as a little austere from an ex-editor to an editor.

But whatever his mood, Morley remained the charmer, and to see him was to forget everything else, and to renew the old homage and affection. He was an admirable host, most fastidious in his choice of food and wine, and in the selection of his guests to make a good ensemble. He would remember that you had liked a certain brand of champagne, or that you were a "red wine man," or a "white wine man," and there it was waiting for you. I have memories of many delightful hours at his table, but let me be content for the moment with one. It was at Elm Park Gardens, in 1898, and the guest of the evening was Chamberlain, and the rest of the company were, I think, Birrell, Buckle (then editor of *The Times*), H. H. Fowler, and myself. We fell to talking about the proposed memorial to Mr. Gladstone, and Chamberlain said vehemently that, having paid his meed of respect in the House of Commons, he would not subscribe one penny to any Gladstone memorial. "Come, come," said Morley, "that's not quite charitable, is it?" "It may not be charitable, but it is honest," was the retort; "Gladstone committed the greatest crime a statesman can be guilty of—he broke up his party."

"How about Peel?" was the next question, but Chamberlain would make no exception even for him. Peel should have stayed out and left the Whigs to repeal the Corn Laws. From that we passed to Chamberlain's own position. By breaking the Liberal party, Mr. Gladstone had spoilt his career. There was only one position worth having in public life, and that was the position of Prime Minister. In this, at all events, you could do what you liked, if only for a short time. Morley demurred to this, and asked Chamberlain to name the Prime Minister who had been able to do what he liked, if only for a short time. Chamberlain brushed the objection aside and repeated that the Prime Minister who chose could do what he liked, though it might be for a short time. Anyhow, to be Prime Minister was what he wanted to be, and what he was fairly entitled to expect he would be in due course if the Liberal party had remained united; and now it was gone for ever, and for the rest of his life he was driven back on the second best. But, things being what they were, he was determined to make the best of the second best, and he claimed up to that time to have done pretty well. An "impenitent Radical," he had got the greater part of his unauthorized programme out of the Tory party, and if he had to yield some things, who hadn't to yield? Did we call him an opportunist? He had no objection. All practical politics were opportunism—there was a good kind and a bad kind of opportunism, and his opportunism was the good kind. There was no greater folly than to sit down and lament the past or to fly from the scene like Rosebery, who was no politician, because you could not get all you wanted.

We sat till past midnight hearing Chamberlain talk, and the impression of his extraordinary personality and essential honesty was irresistible. But I thought of that talk five years later, when someone else broke up a party.

CHAPTER VII

THE NEW IMPERIALISM

London in the 'Nineties—Politicians and Literary Folk—A Letter from Meredith—Talks with Meredith—Youth in the 'Nineties—The New Imperial Tunes—A Rebuke to Covetousness—The Jameson Raid—A Talk with Cecil Rhodes—The South African Committee—Harcourt's Action on It.

I

THE years from 1892 to 1899 come back to memory as from a vanished past. One sees them in retrospect as the last days of the old "society" with its well-bred prosperity, ceremonial ways and unquestioning acceptance of an existing order which it seemed to think eternal and unchangeable. The three years of Liberal Government were but an interlude in a prolonged Conservative ascendancy, and the "best people" took it calmly, in complete confidence that the House of Lords would see that no harm happened to them. Harcourt's Budget in 1894 was the only shadow on the scene, and deep were the growls at this modest instalment of democratic finance. But money came easily, and the big houses found after all that it was not necessary to retrench their footmen or check the pleasant tide of entertainment which ebbed and flowed between town and country. Victorian pomp and propriety still lingered, but we were getting near the end of it, and the young people talked, as they do now, of the impenetrable dullness of their elders, and proclaimed a new and insurgent movement which they called *fin de siècle*.

Two things dwell in my memory as symbols of this old London—window-boxes and horses. All the "bedding-out" plants in the world—pink geraniums, calceolarias, striped petunias, blue lobelias—seemed to be gathered on the window-sills of Mayfair and Belgravia during the summer months.

The solemn stucco houses of the big squares flashed into these flowers on a certain day in May, and some of the great and wealthy turned the flat spaces over the porches into bowers of palms and hydrangeas. This sudden efflorescence announced the beginning of the season—a date which one can never ascertain in these days—and added a gaiety to the scene till the last week in July. Then the horses. I am old enough to remember hammer-cloths and wigged coachmen and powdered footmen in silk stockings hanging on to the coaches of the great. They were an unending fascination to me as a child. A great lady descending into such a coach from a house with a hatch on it is to this day my mental image of ancestral nobility. But this was a kind of circus show, and the lumbering animals that drew the coaches were not to be compared with the prancing horses of the 'eighties and 'nineties. Of all the brilliant scenes that I have seen in European cities I can think of none to equal that between five and seven on a summer afternoon in the "Ladies Mile" in Hyde Park during those years. There is no such frame for a beautiful woman well-dressed as a victoria drawn by a fine pair of horses, and hundreds of these flashed by and presently drew up on each side of the road for the supreme moment when the "Princess" drove down the Mile. She was a vision of loveliness, and never so graceful and gracious as at this moment. If a decorative society serves any purpose, I cannot imagine its being better served than in this way. There was a refinement and vivacity and a sense of motion and colour in this display of wealth and fashion that gave it charm and distinction. Though harnessed to the chariot of the newest millionaire, the horses could never be vulgar. To walk home from Fleet Street and take a glimpse of this scene on the way was one of the pleasures of the old London.

These were the days before bridge and every-night dancing, and the old dinner party held its sway. We had much of that in many of the circles, political, literary, and artistic. There were my wife's friends, the painters and writers who had forgathered at her parents' home, Andrew Lang, Henry James, Sidney Colvin, Anstey Guthrie, W. B. Richmond, Frank Dicksee, Edwin Abbey, Alma-Tadema, G. H. Boughton, and others who were always kind and welcoming; there were the politicians and their wives, especially Lady Tweedmouth and Lady Reay, both of them the kindest and wisest of women; and other intimate friends of our own with whom we made occasional excursions into theatreland and supped in the company of actors and playwrights. Anthony Hope, Robert Hichens, Richard Harding Davis, Ethel Barrymore, and Harold Frederic were of this circle, and there was an occasional glimpse of the fugitive Barrie. Then there was Vaughan Williams, the Judge, and his wife, who were for years the kindest and most intimate of friends, and who with their son and daughters made us completely at home at their house on Leith Hill, where a group of young people held inexhaustible debate. We were often at the Asquiths' house in Cavendish Square, and still oftener in Haldane's rooms at Whitehall Court. Every fortnight or so I lunched with Haldane in his Chambers, and another fortnightly fixture that began about this time, and continued till the day before he started on his last voyage, was a lunch every other Friday with W. T. Stead. He and I were, I suppose, about as unlike each other as two men could well be, but I was greatly attached to him and he was a continual inspiration to me and helped to supply a great deal that was lacking in my own temperament.*

II

One day in the early summer of 1898 I found among my letters at the office one which instantly attracted me by the beautiful architectural handwriting on the envelope. It was from George Meredith, addressed to the editor, and he said that he had been greatly impressed by both the form and the substance of a leading article two days previously, and that, if it were according to the etiquette of the trade, he would like to become acquainted with the writer. The article was on the Greco-Turkish war, and I was the author. I blushed with pride and pleasure at this unsolicited compliment from

* I had the privilege of unveiling the memorial to him on the Thames Embankment and delivered the address on that occasion. On the last Friday, the day before he sailed in the "Titanic," he said to me as we parted, speaking of his coming journey, "I have a feeling that I shall be like Saul, the son of Kish, who set out to seek his father's asses and found a kingdom."

one of the heroes whom I had worshipped afar off, and in a few days a meeting was arranged and was followed by others. I once asked Morley who, among the famous men he had known, most corresponded to the general idea of a man of genius, and he answered without hesitation "Meredith"—with a correcting afterword, "always, of course, saving Mr. Gladstone." I cannot imagine any other answer. With his beautiful face, his piercing eyes, his grand manner and his torrential talk, Meredith remains in my mind as *the* man of genius of all I have seen, and in outward semblance unapproached by any other. To be with him was a delight, which was never in any degree marred by that uncomfortable sense of the common clay and its infirmities which attends intercourse with some of the great.

A few months later he was very ill and had come to London for an operation. He asked me to come and see him when he was convalescing, and joyfully I went. He described himself as a man who had been hurled over a torrent and been caught first on one ledge and then on another. Now he was on the third ledge, awaiting the final plunge into "the great deep pool of all-being." He said it with a sort of enthusiasm, and it was clear that the final adventure had no terror for him. Happily he lived for several years after that and I went again, this time with my wife, to see him at Box Hill. Then he was very deaf, but his talk was as wonderful as ever. You had only to mention a subject and he flew away with it at a breakneck gallop, leaving the listener in a breathless scurry to keep pace with him. Somehow we got talking of the sensations of the condemned criminal on the morning of his hanging. "I *know*," he cried, "I *know*, for I have been through it all, and I tell you, he is dead before he is hanged." Swift character sketches came from him at the mention of individuals—this of John Morley, "Cut him open and you will find a clergyman inside;" and of someone else I have forgotten, "He is plaster without laths."

Some writers surprise one by their unlikeness to their writing selves, but Meredith was the Meredith of the novels and poems, only more so. Hearing his talk was to realize that his style was not a wilful obscurity, but a breathless effort to capture his own thoughts, which never could be quite run down. He saw everything in a vivid imagery which was never for a moment still. The commonest things gleamed and glittered in his mind, and he seemed to be under a compelling necessity to express in words their unceasing motion and everlasting changeableness and variety. Nothing but metaphor would serve, and when one failed, he picked up another and yet another, till he dropped the inexhaustible theme in a comic despair. Never have I seen the normal consciousness so multiplied in one man. Other writers in old age gave the impression of having written themselves out; Meredith at eighty left you with the feeling that he had not written a tithe of what was in him.

Judged by these giants who were still on the scene, one felt a certain smallness in the young men of the 'nineties. They seemed old and their seniors young. The *copia fandi*, the giving out of the full man because he was full, the entire unconsciousness of their art or their accomplishment, which one observed in the great Victorians, seemed suddenly to have given place to an inordinate talk about art and style. The tiresome habit, of which the fashion was set by Whistler and Oscar Wilde, of posing as infallibles who *told* you what art and style was and pitied your infirmity if you hinted a fault in their perfect creations, descended to a crowd of lesser men with whom it was difficult to keep patience. The mere fact that this pose was thought necessary, and still more that it succeeded, seemed to me a reflection on the times, and caused a certain impatience with the little masters who after a prolonged alchemy produced the perfect short story or the flawless lyric.

III

All through this time one heard the strains of the big brass band playing the new imperial tunes. Chamberlain was its conductor, and there were many sorts of instruments in it. Kipling played incomparable solos, and after him Henley. The newspapers crashed their accompaniments. The themes were both commercial and patriotic. To carry the flag into new worlds, though they might, as the late Lord Salisbury used to say, be very thin soil, was supposed to be an end in itself; but trade, we were assured, would follow the flag, and the whole world was a potential market. Soon after the Unionist Government came to power in 1895, South African Chartered £1 shares rose to 8. About this time I had a letter from an elderly aunt of great piety who confided in me that she had invested a considerable slice of her small property in these shares at this price. Her conscience was uneasy. Was it right, she asked, that she with her profession of religion should take this wealth? Providence seemed to have thrown it in her way, but would other people suffer, if she were thus enriched, and did patriotism justify a proceeding which on the face of it looked so predatory?

Within a month Chartered shares had gone down a precipice, for the Jameson Raid had intervened. My aunt took it piously as part of a mysterious dispensation for the correction of covetousness. But the mass of people saw only the fiasco which had blighted the imperialist cause and brought discredit on the British name. There was incredulity and mortification and a general call for strict inquiry and impartial justice. But then suddenly came the German Emperor's telegram to Kruger turning all this wrath into a new channel and, to hasty minds, justifying the Rhodesians, who had long before this hinted at German intrigues and the necessity of prompt action to get in front of them. Kruger, instead of being the injured innocent, was now said to be displayed in his true colours, i.e. in intimate relations with the German Emperor and, with his encouragement, defying the British power in South Africa. Self-respect was restored, a flying squadron was mobilized, and the mass of people were persuaded that the Raid was merely an unfortunate episode in a perfectly well-justified endeavour to protect British interests against Boer and German conspirators.

In December, 1895, the month of the raid, I had been appointed editor of the *Westminster*, but had not taken up my duties, and Cook was still in command. My wife and I went to spend Christmas with the Vaughan Williams's in their house on Leith Hill, and there I met a chance acquaintance who told me a story about South Africa which sent me rushing back to London to look up the maps and measure the distance between the Bechuanaland border and Johannesburg. The

Westminster, at all events, was well primed with the necessary material to deal with what was coming, and it puzzled me greatly to find that other papers were taken by surprise. But the story which had been told me was that of a "bloodless revolution" with a British force going in to seal the accomplished fact, and Jameson's bolt into the arms of Kruger was the last thing that my informant or anyone else had expected. Since Cook was still editor, my part was the subordinate one, but this affair raised the only question in which there had been a shadow of difference between us. I never could share his or Garrett's or Stead's enthusiasm for these South African heroes, and I watched with some uneasiness the very cautious disapproval which Cook expressed of their last escapade. Here, in fact, was the beginning of the split which developed later in the Liberal party on the South African question. Cook and Garrett were absolutely honest in their belief in Rhodes and their affection for "Dr. Jim," and their loyal backing of their friends counted for more, I think, with the right wing of the Liberal party than any other single cause in the coming years.

I felt it to be a highly critical moment, and, when Cook departed, gave a much sharper edge to the *Westminster* comments. Rhodes, meanwhile, had come to London and I saw him for the first time on the invitation of Hawksley, the solicitor of the South African Company. He gave me the impression of a great child who had eaten something unwholesome and was suffering the pangs of indigestion. There was something curiously alluring about him, and even on that one evening I became aware of the two sides to his character—the mixture of coarseness and refinement, realism and idealism, the lumbering speech breaking suddenly into something like rhapsody. His moods changed rapidly. To me he railed at his luck and declared his determination to get back his old power and position; to my wife he spoke wistfully of the shortness of life and the hard fate that would prevent him from seeing the saplings he was planting grow into trees, and the young men of the future thronging the university that he was founding. At the end I felt puzzled and irritated. He was so sincerely concerned for Dr. Jim, and so exceedingly sorry for himself and the crash of his plans, and yet so incapable of seeing other people's points of view. To get himself out of the mess, to save Dr. Jim and the Raiders, and to leave everything else to him, seemed to be the limit of his ideas. What threatened for the future, and what sort of plight the Imperial Government was landed in, both at home and in the eyes of foreign nations, seemed hardly to trouble him at all.

Chamberlain was very angry and, I think, with reason. Whatever his part might have been in the previous months, it was Jameson who, in Rhodes's phrase, had "upset the apple-cart" by a misunderstanding with his principal, who was Rhodes himself. In the circumstances it seemed to be their duty as patriotic men to take their punishment and keep the Government out of it. Instead, they threw out dark hints that if they went down Chamberlain should go down too, and the story was told of Rhodes going to the Colonial Office and there leaving certain documents with a polite request to know what the Colonial Secretary was "going to do about them." Rhodes, according to his friends, was actuated by a chivalrous desire to save Jameson and the young men who, under Jameson, had got themselves into what was undoubtedly a most infernal scrape. That was intelligible, so long as their necks were in danger, but from the moment Kruger had released them and sent them home, the penalties that threatened were altogether trivial compared with the damage to the public interest which was bound to follow if they were left unpunished.

The Committee of Inquiry which met in the following year was from beginning to end a disaster. It worked in an atmosphere of patriotic fervour, anti-German wrath and extreme personal bitterness, which was highly unfavourable to the doing of justice. The chief impression left on the onlooker was that a stubborn but extremely obscure duel was going on between Chamberlain and Rhodes, and that this governed all other proceedings. I attended every meeting held in public and wrote reports which Gould illustrated with lively but slightly malicious sketches of the South African heroes and magnates. To this day I cannot think of that Committee without feeling over again something of the bewilderment and exasperation which its proceedings caused in me, and the hopelessness of my effort to give sense and sequence to what took place. Witnesses were whisked out of the box just when their evidence seemed to be becoming important; the public sittings were suddenly suspended when the scent seemed to be getting warm; and, when the curtain was raised again, an entirely different branch of the inquiry was found to have been taken up. All the witnesses seemed willing to wound and yet afraid to strike; and the Committee itself habitually to accept the most far-fetched explanations of incidents of which the simple construction was under its nose.

It seemed to me then (and it does still) that if full disclosures were judged to be impossible, there should have been no Committee, or, if a Committee, that its proceedings should have been private. Whatever the problem might be, a hushing-up in public, which was what the Committee appeared to be, was of all solutions the least desirable. It led to excited conjectures of all kinds, one of the most popular being that the Prince of Wales, afterwards King Edward, had rashly committed himself to the Raiders and that it was necessary at all costs to conceal his part in it. There was not a word of truth in it, but people were puzzled to account for the rather odd fact that the Prince was a punctual and regular visitor to the Committee room, coming in by a side door every morning and remaining until the adjournment at lunch time. It was so unlike him that all sorts of motives were conjectured. Some said that he was showing his sympathy with Rhodes; but the more picturesque story was that he was on the watch for dynastic interests which might be imperilled by untimely disclosures, and it was not thought credible that he was going, like anyone else, to see a show which was intrinsically interesting and dramatic.

IV

The Committee to this day is regarded as one of the mysteries of our time, but when the facts are published, as they undoubtedly will be one day, they will, I imagine, confirm the impression of those who, like myself, were close students of its public proceedings. This was that Chamberlain had incautiously entangled himself with the promoters of the expected "bloodless revolution" at Johannesburg, and that Rhodes, if pressed, would have set up the plea that Chamberlain's impatience was the cause of the muddle in which Jameson broke loose. The line between the foreknowledge which a competent Colonial Secretary ought to have had, and a seeming approval or encouragement of the enterprise, was always a fine one, and Chamberlain was not of a prudent or cautious temper. Harcourt's son has since told us that his father "always believed, though this could not be subjected to proof, that Chamberlain was aware of, and by implication a participant in, the preparations for a rising at Johannesburg,"* but he took the line that the Committee was appointed to inquire into the Raid, and not into the rising, and he honestly believed Chamberlain to be innocent of that and had no patience with what he thought to be the mean attempt of Rhodes and the Raiders to escape by spreading the issue and involving the Government in their adventure. Hawksley, Rhodes's solicitor, while keeping his counsel about the undisclosed documents, told me repeatedly that they would have added nothing to what he called the plain inference from the evidence already produced, but there was a considerable difference between an inference from statements which, taken separately, could each be explained away, and the disclosure of some phrase or sentence which could not have been. This, I imagine, is what the Colonial Office wished to avoid, and what weighed with honourable men who lent themselves to the evasion and even sacrified their careers for it.

If so, I think they were right, having regard to what we now know to have been the circumstances in Europe. At this distance of time, no one would be greatly troubled to learn that Chamberlain had committed himself to the Johannesburg conspirators, but at that moment it would have been a very awkward disclosure. It would have inflamed opinion all over Europe and especially in Germany where, in 1897, Emperor and Chancellor were feeling their way back from the rash adventure of the Kruger telegram. At the time I attached little importance to the plea of foreign complications, but having read the German documents and memoirs of this period, I am less disposed to treat it lightly. Germany, in

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* "Life of Sir William Harcourt," ii. 429.

1897, no doubt knew all that there was to be known about the Jameson Raid and the Johannesburg revolution, but a public pronouncement reviving the animosities of December, 1895, would probably have been as inconvenient to her as to us. According to all the standards of European diplomacy in those days the occasion was one on which hushing-up was thoroughly justified, and the European criticism was mainly that it had been done so clumsily.

In any case, Harcourt's view was that the main thing required of the Committee was to convict the Raiders and all who were responsible for the raid, and he looked with pride upon the Report—which was largely his own handiwork—as having accomplished this result. But he expected that conviction would be followed by punishment, and he was utterly taken by surprise and considered himself duped when, in the House of Commons debate which followed (July 26, 1897), Chamberlain whitewashed Rhodes and declared that he had done nothing inconsistent with honour. Chamberlain was supposed to have spoken under extreme pressure,* and to the very end the Rhodesians appear to have maintained their attitude that, if they went down, the Colonial Secretary should go with them.

I have heard a very eminent man say that he dated the South African War from the moment that Chamberlain sat down after making this speech, and that he considered the greatest Parliamentary failure of his time to have been that of the Liberal leaders who failed to make an effective protest against it. But Harcourt and C. B. had both exhausted their right to speak, and it would have needed an amazing quickness and resolution for any of their juniors to get up on the spur of the moment and take a line which might have cut across their intentions and added another complication to the many that already afflicted the Liberal Front Bench. The occasion came and passed in the twinkling of an eye, but in all the Parliamentary scenes I have witnessed, I remember nothing quite like the angry mortification of that evening. Both Harcourt and C. B. felt bitterly that they had been fooled, but, here again, Rhodes's refusal to be sacrificed was the ruling factor.

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* "Annual Register," 1897, p. 169.

CHAPTER VIII

THE SOUTH AFRICAN WAR

Milner in 1898—A Talk with "Dr. Jim"—A Critical Despatch and a Leading Article—Many Remonstrances—C. B.'s Approval—His Opinion of Oxford and Balliol—From Peace to War—The War Atmosphere—War and Policy—Gould's Cartoons—The First "Military Correspondent"—Frederick Greenwood—A Press Bazaar.

I

WATCHING the South African Committee had deepened my mistrust of Rhodes and the men associated with him who appeared to be controlling British policy in South Africa. Jameson's mistake might be condoned as an impulsive and not ungenerous act, but the subsequent proceedings of these men seemed to me, on any assumption, and most of all on their own assumption (that the Government was privy to their doings), to be beyond forgiveness. Garrett, whose faith in them was unquenchable, wrote to me from South Africa to say that if I was out there and in their atmosphere I should understand it all, but my replies, I am afraid, were unsympathetic. I find among my letters one from a Unionist Cabinet Minister written during the war, who gently reproaches me with the fact that in 1898 I attended a public dinner to Milner on his appointment as High Commissioner to South Africa, whereas later I was active in criticism of his proceedings. "Much water has flowed under the bridges since you and I sat together at that table," he said. It was true, but Milner's appointment seemed to me at the time the one gleam of light in a dark situation. He seemed to bring just the kind of new blood that was wanted at that moment. I knew him to be honest and upright; I believed him to be a man of peace, and drew the inference that after many adventures, Chamberlain intended seriously to try a quiet and conciliatory policy.

So for a time it seemed to be. I met Milner at lunch *à trois* with Stead one day at the end of 1898, when he came home for his first short leave, and we talked much of South Africa. He said that the situation was always tiresome and vexatious, but there was nothing to be done about it, and he advised me to "think about something else and write about something else." How he came to change his opinion, when he returned, I do not know, but he found a bitter quarrel raging between the British South Africans and General Butler, who had acted as High Commissioner in his absence, and irritation at Butler's action contributed, I think, to drive him off the middle course which alone could have saved the situation. By the end of February, 1899, the British campaign against Kruger was again in full swing, and in common, I suppose, with most editors in London, I was being bombarded with letters from South Africa preparing the way for a "forward movement."

Early in the spring Dr. Jameson came to London and invited me, among others, to go and talk to him in his rooms in Down Street. There I found a friend of his fresh from Pretoria, who described himself as being in the confidence of the Colonial Office and read from a written document what he declared to be a highly confidential communication. This set out the plan of demanding the franchise from Kruger for the Uitlanders—which was the groundwork of the subsequent policy. I jibbed and said that, on the face of it, to propose that British citizens should put off their British citizenship and become citizens of the South African Republic seemed a queer way of asserting British authority. But this, it was explained to me, was only the outward appearance, for the newly enfranchised would be sufficient in numbers to swamp the Boer oligarchy and so to prepare the way for the absorption of the Transvaal into a Union of South Africa.

I asked whether they thought Kruger would submit to this plan, the consequence of which must be as plain to him as it was to them. They answered that Kruger never "looked into the mouth of a cannon," and when I asked why they thought that, they gave me three instances, the Stellaland Raid, the Limpopo Trek, the affair of the Vaal Drifts. I objected that all these were trivial affairs, in which nothing worse than a little mortification had followed from surrender, whereas what they were now proposing was, on their own showing, vital and mortal to Kruger. Still they persisted that they knew Kruger and I did not, and said they were convinced that if we all spoke together, and spoke quickly, he would surrender to this as to the other demands. "But," I said, "conceive the other hypothesis and tell me what will happen if you are wrong. War?" "Certainly." "But in that case, what sort of war?" Jameson was, as always, perfectly frank. He said undoubtedly a very serious war. "How many troops shall we want?" was my next question. Jameson thought a moment and then said "One army corps in South Africa and two on the water." "Very well, then," I said, "I will consider your plan when I see the slightest prospect of the British Government being ready with any such force." Again he persisted that I was wrong and that I might take it from him that no troops would be wanted, if only we spoke firmly and all spoke together.

Liking for Jameson always prevailed when one was in his company, but I went away from this interview greatly disturbed, and determined to give no backing to a plan which was so confessedly bluff, and, as it seemed to me, very dangerous bluff. Jameson's estimate of the troops needed was, as it turned out, below the mark, but if that number or anything like it had been available when the war came, it is likely enough that they would have been sufficient to end it in a few months. I am not ashamed to own that I had a very real sympathy with the Boers against the hard driving of the mine-owners and others who wished to extinguish their independence, but what weighed with me most in these months was a sense of the extreme risk that we were running in forcing policy to the point of war on an assumption that made reasonable preparation for it a high improbability. The walls of Jericho were to fall to the blasts of a unanimous Press, for which the tune was to be set by speeches and despatches in the style of the "new diplomacy;" and the Government, being assured that "Mr. Kruger never looked in the mouth of a cannon," would keep the War Office in leash and give the Colonial Secretary a free hand.

II

This was my leading idea during the next few months, and when Milner's famous despatch of May 5th, declaring the case for intervention to be "overwhelming," was published I burnt my boats and came out with a strong protest. I specially remember the occasion, for the despatch came in late and the article had to be written in forty minutes. It immediately brought trouble on my head, and incidentally revealed the deep and widening differences in the Liberal party. The strongest remonstrances were addressed to me privately and, I believe, also to Sir George Newnes, who then, as many times later, greatly eased my burden by assuring me of his entire agreement. The gravamen of the complaint was that the *Westminster* had said these things. The *Daily News* or the *Manchester Guardian* might have been expected to say them —they were Little Englanders and anti-Imperialists who would say anything—but the *Westminster* was supposed to be the organ of Liberal Imperialism, and the mouthpiece of Lord Rosebery, and if it could not be depended upon to back the diplomatic offensive against the Boers, the Liberal party was lost.

The article, was, I suppose, cabled to South Africa and published there, for I received cabled remonstrances from Garrett and others which were presently followed up by letters. They said in effect that I was spoiling the unanimity which was needed to make the diplomatic offensive safe. "You old women of Fleet Street, can't you even take a thousand-to-one chance of war?" So said Garrett, always zealous and honest and, like Jameson, perfectly open in his opinion that, if war came, it would be a very serious war. I wrote to Garrett on July 4th :—

> Perhaps if I were in South Africa, I should take your view and be very angry with the Home Opposition. Personally I have never defended the Kruger régime, and have only asked myself what price was worth paying to abate it. I have answered so far to myself, certainly not war nor any great cleavage in your community. But certainly even and continuous diplomatic pressure, supported, if you like, by such gradual

trengthening of forces as would give no ground for agitation at any point, but be, in its total effect, the plainest hint to Kruger.

Milner's policy is the opposite of all this. Before the plan of demanding the franchise was a fortnight old, he burnt his boats by sending that despatch (I assume he meant it to be published, for no man who knew Chamberlain would have given him that document unless he had meant it to be published). The despatch was intelligible and right if it meant war *immediately*—that is to say if the troops were on the spot and ready to move. Since war was impossible for at least three months, I simply don't understand it. It invited agitation, divided opinion, gave time for counter-preparations and made Milner's position extremely difficult in the interval except as a War Minister. Perhaps it frightened Kruger a little, but diplomacy must be a stupid business if it has no better means of frightening Kruger than one which drives all your Dutch friends into his camp and fatally divides opinion at home.

Mere points of procedure, some say. I reply not, because the procedure fits only one policy, the fighting policy. It fits even that ill, because it is bad to leave a period for agitation after you have delivered your ultimatum, and before you put your troops into the field. But in any case, those of us who think fighting to be a bad remedy and not to be thought of till all others have been exhausted, are bound to withstand it now or never. We do not see that other remedies have even been tried. The Imperial Government has had no policy since the Raid for good or ill; it has just begun to try the franchise; it has tried it for about three weeks and got something, and if it sticks to it, must get more. Coma alternating with fits—one fit the Raid, another fit this business—is what recent proceedings look like to some of us.

III

During these weeks I was for the first time thrown into intimate relations with Campbell-Bannerman. In his correspondence there is a flattering and friendly letter recording a first meeting with me and my wife in 1898, but I had seen little of him consecutively until this year. He expressed warm approval of the line the *Westminster* was taking and invited me to come and see him and discuss sundry speeches which he was about to make in Parliament or the country. At the beginning of the Transvaal affair, he was in a curious way detached. A stream of letters from South Africa was pouring into both the Liberal camps, on the one side from the Milner group, on the other from men like Merriman and Hofmeyr, but C. B. himself received few or none of these communications and honestly endeavoured to read both with an impartial eye when they were handed on to him. I, of course, showed him the whole of my communications, and they may have helped to form his first and leading thought, which was that the whole proceeding, judged merely as an operation of statecraft, was in the last degree rash and clumsy. I do not think that Rosebery's opinion as a diplomatic craftsman greatly differed, but he was in a position in which he could reserve judgment, whereas C. B., as the leader of the Opposition, was constantly under the compulsion to act and speak.

I have quoted him as having reminded me with a meaning air that he was "Cambridge and Trinity," not "Oxford and Balliol," and he presently began to speak with irritation of the Milner cult—the "religio Milneriana"—as a peculiar emanation of the Oxford-Balliol group. He did not dispute Milner's intellectual capacity, but he thought him a novice on diplomatic ground, and became irritated at the influence which he seemed to exercise over Asquith and Grey, the principal members of the "Balliol group," on the front Opposition bench. This, however, was a gradual development, and, whatever differences there were behind the scene, he carried the whole bench with him on public occasions until the war broke out. Especially was this so in the matter of the private interview which he had with Chamberlain (at the latter's request) at the end of June. Chamberlain, all unconsciously, made the worst impression on C. B. He put forward practically the same argument that Jameson and Garrett had put to me, and convinced C. B. that he was engaged in a dangerous game of "bluff." An acrimonious controversy took place some years later as to whether Chamberlain actually used that word, and on the whole I am inclined to think that it was C. B.'s own, but the thing he described and proposed was undoubtedly what the ordinary mind regards as bluff, and C. B. had all his colleagues with him in refusing to be party to it. On its merits he thought the proposal (for which Chamberlain wanted the consent of the Opposition) to send 10,000 men to South Africa, the worst of all possible courses. Such a force, in his view, was large enough to embitter the situation for diplomacy, but far too small for any military purpose, if diplomacy failed.

IV

There came a pause in the affair at the end of August, and I thought I could safely take a holiday. So we went off to Venice, and thence after a week over the Semmering to Vienna, intending to go down the Danube to Buda-Pesth and finally into Rumania. But we came rushing home after three days in Vienna. Things evidently were racing to a conclusion in the Transvaal, and in my absence the *Westminster* seemed to be giving up the fight as a lost cause. I came back for a last effort, but this time Kruger too seemed to be spoiling for a fight, and his ultimatum was the crowning folly. It was my first experience of war, and I frankly admit that I failed to realize the enormous gulf between the state of peace and the state of war and the instantaneous effect on opinion of the transition. Of course, I did not for a moment doubt that the ultimatum meant war, and in common with most other Englishmen I was for putting Kruger in his place when he demanded that British troops should be "withdrawn from South Africa" and "none now on the high seas be landed in any port." But I could feel no excitement or pleasure in the prospect of administering the necessary correction; rather I felt as a man might who had been landed in litigation by the blundering of his solicitors, and I could not stoke myself up to any belligerent feeling about a fight between combatants so unequally matched as the British Empire and the Boer Republics. So I still looked beyond the war to the policy which should follow upon it, and begged the readers of the *Westminster* to bear in mind that the Boers were not a common enemy, but men who would somehow have to be reconciled to the British Empire, if South Africa was to prosper.

It was a genuine surprise to me to discover that this line was thought to be unpatriotic. But I did discover it before many days were out. Old and intimate friends came to see me and remonstrated; and when they found me obdurate, said solemnly that our intercourse must be suspended until at least the war was over. The real difference between the Liberal Imperialists and the other Liberals was this temperamental something which swept the first into the tide and left the others outside it. My emotions were free, and my brain kept buzzing away at the Boer problem, which I thought of as something outside the war, but the others could think of nothing but the war and the serious emergency in which they thought the country to be placed from the purely military point of view. I urged that the critical line must be maintained by the Liberal party if there was to be any hope of a good solution; the others said that a critical line would unnerve the Government and destroy the Liberal party in a blast of popular wrath. These counsellors, many of them among my most intimate friends, urged me to say that the war was "just and inevitable," and for the present, at all events to talk about nothing except the measures to be taken by the soldiers.

Haldane, I remember, was specially hot on this scent. For all his legal coolness, he seemed to be genuinely swept into the tide, and we had livelier arguments than any that I can recall in the long years of our friendship. The scene, he used to say, must be painted with a broad brush, and there was no room for the subtleties and mental reserves which I wished to impart into it. If the Liberal party wavered in a definite choice between the country and its enemies, it would be ruined and would deserve its fate. I suggested to Rosebery that he should keep himself in reserve until an opportunity offered—as it did eventually in his Chesterfield speech—of saying the statesman's word, but his answer for the time being was that he "dated from the ultimatum as Mohamedans from the Hejira," and could think of nothing before or after. Others were even more uncompromising, and said flatly that if the *Westminster* line was taken by the Liberal leaders, they would either go out of politics or quit the Liberal party. I was especially reproached by this group for defection from the Liberal Imperialist faith.

But the situation was no easier between the *Westminster* and the pro-Boers. Together with these reminders of the special circumstances which distinguished this war from ordinary wars between nations, I was writing strongly for vigorous military measures to bring it to an early conclusion and doing my best to combat the optimism which expected it to be "over before Christmas." This seemed rampant jingoism to the pro-Boers who were courageously speaking up for the little nationality under the harrow of the big Empire. That too, was a perfectly sincere opinion passionately held, but it was not mine. It seemed to me that Kruger had brought a great many of his troubles upon himself and that the author of the ultimatum could not reasonably complain of consequences which he deliberately invited. Moreover, I saw no solution of the South African trouble but the ultimate union of British and Dutch under the British flag. But this also, from the pro-Boer point of view, was a defection from the pure gospel of Liberalism, and the left wing presently began to upbraid me as a dishonest trimmer who deserved, and would receive, the fate of the Laodicean. If the Liberal party, they said, could not be preserved except through these shifts, then let the Liberal party go to the devil, so that Liberalism should survive. It was specially thrown in my teeth by this group that I had written a strong letter of dissuasion to certain Liberal leaders who had been invited to attend an anti-war meeting on the last day before the ultimatum, and when it was known to be on its way.

V

In these difficult times the *Westminster* was immensely helped by Gould's cartoons. It was freely predicted that the coming of the war would extinguish Gould, but the very opposite proved to be the case. He was never so fertile and ingenious or so true to the fine instinct which enabled him to hit shrewdly and provide the relief of humour without forgetting the gravity of the times. The "Westminster Alice," dealing with the war and the politics of these times, has recently been republished in the complete edition of the writings of Hector H. Munro ("Saki"), and, looking at it again, I am still of opinion that it is one of the very few successful parodies of the famous original. The chapter in which Lord Lansdowne figured as the White Knight set all the town laughing, and may be taken still as symbolic of all the War Secretaries who did not expect war.

> "You see I had read a book written by some one to prove that warfare under modern conditions is impossible. You may imagine how disturbing that was to a man of my profession. Many men would have thrown up the whole thing and gone home. But I grappled with the situation. You will never guess what I did."
>
> Alice pondered. "You went to war, of course——"
>
> "Yes, but not under modern conditions."
>
> The Knight stopped his horse so that he might enjoy the full effect of this announcement.
>
> "Now, for instance," he continued kindly, seeing that Alice had not recovered her breath, "you observe this little short-range gun that I have hanging to my saddle? Why do you suppose that I have sent out guns of that particular kind? Because, if they happened to fall into the hands of the enemy, they'd be very little use to him. That was my own invention."

The book alluded to in this passage was the peptonized version of Emile Bloch's famous book on modern warfare which Stead produced, giving it his own title, "Is War now Impossible?" The appearance of Stead's title on the book, which in the cartoon hangs from the saddle of the White Knight's horse, brought me a pained letter from the author, who protested that he had never suggested anything so ridiculous and, in order to show me what he did suggest, presently forwarded the whole eleven volumes of his original work. That maintained the far different, and, as events proved, wholly wise and prescient, proposition that war under modern conditions would be extremely unlike what the European General Staffs and military experts supposed it would be, and something far more costly and destructive than they at all realized.

It was Chamberlain's habit to say that he liked and admired Gould's cartoons even when they touched himself. Nevertheless, it was conveyed to me one day—by Lady Dorothy Nevill, if I remember rightly—that there was one kind of cartoon which he did not at all like, and this was the kind in which he appeared as a dog. I am bound to admit that some of the dogs into which Gould had transformed him were exceedingly disreputable animals. The muddy and dishevelled retriever who picks up the khaki bird and lays it at the feet of Salisbury and Balfour (in the famous cartoon after the 1900 Election), justifies the repugnance with which his masters accept the offering and their fastidious disapproval of his methods. The dog who has "eaten all his labels," the dog running amok down the village streets, while the inhabitants beat a hasty retreat within doors, are certainly not the sort of dog a self-respecting man would wish to be. Gould and I used to have serious consultations as to whether or when an emergency justified the bringing out of the dog, and we kept it, as a rule, for the great occasions. But as soon as Gould heard that the dog gave offence to Chamberlain, he put it back in its kennel and never brought it out again.

Another powerful support in these times was Capt. Cairnes, a son of the eminent economist, Professor Cairnes, who joined the staff as military correspondent on the outbreak of war. Cairnes's insight seemed to a civilian miraculous and uncanny. Time after time he predicted with absolute accuracy what must happen, if British generals persisted in certain lines of strategy. I remember his telling me twelve hours before the event that the capture of Methuen was absolutely inevitable, and pointing to the spot on the map where it would take place. The advice that he gave, though for several months it fell on deaf ears, was overwhelmingly justified by the event. Cairnes was the first of the "military correspondents" and, without disparagement to his successors, I cannot think that he has ever been excelled. In addition to his great professional knowledge, he seemed to have all the accomplishments of the trained journalist. He wrote with incredible speed on the spur of the moment, kept accurately to his space, and responded cheerfully to any demand. He was unsparing in criticism when he thought it deserved, and appeared to think nothing of the frowns of authority, or the possible effect on his own career. His book, "The Absent-minded War," had a great vogue, and was, perhaps, the most damaging indictment of the conduct of the war in its early months produced by any individual, and though it was published anonymously its authorship was no secret in official circles. I often wondered how the War Office could permit so manifestly able a soldier to be anywhere at such a time except in its own inner councils, and at the end of two years it had the good sense to reclaim him and place him at the head of an educational department for officers which it was planning at this time. Unfortunately he had been no more than a few weeks at this work when he died suddenly, to the great loss of the country and the grief of his friends, who knew him for a very lovable as well as an exceptionally gifted man.

His place at the *Westminster* was taken by Col. Repington, who became in after years the best known of all the "military correspondents." What remained of the war left little scope for serious military criticism, and Repington got to work on the problems of reconstruction and the larger military questions which had begun to loom up in Europe. He, too, was a man of extraordinary knowledge and great facility as a journalist, but he was not technically on the staff, and when the war was over, I could not find space for more than a weekly contribution from him. So naturally he welcomed the fuller opportunity which *The Times* was able to give him. No fair comparison can be instituted between the work of the military journalist in the Boer War and that of the same men or their successors in the Great War, for the censorship changed all the conditions in the later period, and kept military criticism within the narrowest limits. Had the censorship been in operation during the Boer War, a full half of Cairnes's writings would certainly have been disallowed, but whether this would have been in the public interest may be gravely doubted. In saying this I am not at all reflecting on the necessity of the censorship in European warfare. So far as our lights went, Cairnes and I were scrupulously careful to publish nothing which would be of service to the enemy, but if we made a mistake, the authorities had sufficient control of the cables to South Africa to prevent its being of consequence. I should have been sorry to take the same responsibility in the years of the European struggle, when the ways of leakage into Europe were many and incontrollable.

One frequent and useful contributor in these years was Frederick Greenwood, the famous Conservative journalist and former editor of the *Pall Mall Gazette*. Greenwood was, so to speak, the "father of my chapel," the originator of the evening journalism of opinion from which the *Westminster* was descended, and it gave me peculiar pleasure that his name should be on our roll. Holding strong views about the unwisdom of Unionist policy in South Africa, he courageously came out of his retirement and intimated to me that he was ready to write, if I would give him the word. Needless to say he had the word at once, and for four years or more he wrote steadily on South Africa and was sometimes lured into other themes. In spite of his advanced age, he wrote as well as ever, and seemed to have lost none of the skill and subtlety with which he had held the previous generation of serious readers. I saw him often, and talk with him was always stimulating. Towards the end of this period I helped to organize a public dinner to him, at which Morley presided, and I remember still the delightful speech which Barrie, one of his oldest contributors on the *St. James's Gazette*, made on this occasion. I remember another thing on this occasion which set me thinking about journalism. This was the inordinate stress which Greenwood himself and other speakers laid on the part which he had played in the purchase of the Suez Canal shares. It was no doubt a useful and interesting part, but it would have been all in the day's work for even a subordinate Minister; and that it should be seriously regarded as the principal event in the life of a man who for fifty years had been giving his best to journalism and had influenced opinion as steadily and usefully as any man in his time, seemed to me a strange distortion of values. Greenwood's title to fame is not that he helped Disraeli to purchase the Suez Canal shares, but that he was a great editor and a very distinguished writer.

VI

One incident which belongs to these years may still be in the memory of the journalists and others who took part in it. On a certain day early in 1898 my wife, who had worked at the London Hospital for several years, told me she had promised Sydney Holland (now Lord Knutsford) to raise £5,000 for the Hospital's Quinquennial Appeal. I gasped and asked what I was expected to do, and the answer was, nothing. Her plan was ready made; it was to hold a Press Bazaar in which each of the more important papers, daily and weekly, was to undertake a stall. This would not only produce the money, but set all the papers simultaneously advertising the Quinquennial Appeal and probably in the aggregate bring double or treble that sum into the coffers of the London Hospital.

I am afraid I was still sceptical, and replied that a miracle would be wrought if the London papers could be induced to co-operate in this or any other scheme. My wife persisted, and within ten days had bearded almost every editor and manager in London, and to my great relief and surprise, completed her list of stalls and formed a committee on which almost every important newspaper, daily and weekly, was represented. The Bazaar was held in the big suite of rooms at the Hotel Cecil, on June 28th and 29th, 1898, and was an amazing success. It turned out that the combined newspapers had altogether underrated their capacity of attracting the crowd, and had the whole hotel been taken and the affair spread over four days instead of two, the proceeds might easily have been doubled. I shall never forget the struggle to keep the stairway free for the Princess of Wales (afterwards Queen Alexandra), who had taken a kindly interest from the beginning and came on the first day to open the bazaar.*

As a result £13,000 was handed to Sydney Holland, and in the following year my wife got up the first ball ever held in the Albert Hall, and added another £6,000. Other deserving charities had now got on the scent, and she found herself besieged by applicants begging her to repeat these efforts on their behalf. This opened up an alarming vista of life dedicated to bazaars and balls, and the answer was always for the London Hospital only. But there was ample work to be done for that, and a few weeks after the Press Bazaar she suggested to Sydney Holland that she should take a house by the sea at Tankerton, near Whitstable, and try an experiment which had long been in her mind. This was to apply the open-air treatment (which till then had been confined to tuberculous cases) to wounds—following operations—which would not heal, or only heal very slowly, in the atmosphere of London. Sydney Holland warmly approved, and the surgeons thought it a good idea. So a hospital of fifteen beds was started and, with the aid of two or three generous friends, especially Frank Lloyd, Lord Cowdray, and Alfred Harmsworth and his wife, was kept busily at work during the next fifteen years, with results that more than justified expectation. From that time onwards bazaars and subscription balls were "for Tankerton only."

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* A cherished memory of this time is the friendship we formed with Oliver Borthwick, son of Lord Glenesk, the then proprietor of the *Morning Post*. Borthwick was a young man of great ability, and singular charm, whose early death was a great grief to his friends and a heavy loss to London journalism, in which he seemed marked out for a highly distinguished career.

We spent many of our week-ends, and my wife many days in the week, at Tankerton, between 1899 and 1914, and there was great pleasure in watching the good work of the doctors and nurses, and the return to life and health of the great majority of the 150 patients who on an average passed through the little hospital each year.

CHAPTER IX

THE SMOOTHER AND HIS DIFFICULTIES

Bitterness Between Parties—Liberal Imperialists and Pro-Boers—C. B.'s Problem—Two Critical Moments—Much Good Advice—A Remonstrance from Morley—The Chesterfield Speech—Harcourt's Comments—A Difficult Moment—The Rosebery Enigma.

I

I HAVE never believed that either Milner or Chamberlain desired a war in South Africa. All the evidence, it seems to me, goes to prove that they honestly accepted the assurance given them by the South African British, and repeated to me by Dr. Jameson, that the risk of war was negligible, if a sufficiently formidable demonstration could be made in this country. And this, I think, explains both the hectoring manner of Chamberlain's diplomacy and the extraordinary bitterness which developed between parties, when this idea miscarried and war came. It was passionately asserted, and again, I think, honestly believed on the Government side, that the demonstration would have succeeded, and the war have been avoided, if only the Opposition had "played the game" and backed the Government during the previous months. From this it was but a short step to the actual assertion that the Opposition had betrayed the country, and partisans took it without the smallest hesitation. Liberal Imperialists equally with pro-Boers found themselves exposed to this attack, and for the next three years it seemed to be a deliberate part of Chamberlain's tactics to foment the domestic quarrel in the Liberal party by representing both as indistinguishable items in a party tainted through and through with lack of patriotism and sympathy with the enemy. When the Khaki Election of 1900 came, no distinction was made between the different brands of criminals, and all alike found themselves roasted on the same fire.

If this helped to draw the line firmly between Unionist and Liberal, it also greatly embittered the relations of the Liberal camps. In writing C. B.'s life I quoted a Liberal Imperialist as saying, "It is one thing to go to the stake for principles you believe in, and quite another to be roasted alive for causes you abhor," and this was the feeling of many in that group at this time. The thought that they were being exposed to this martyrdom by another section of the party caused deep resentment, and C. B. was bombarded with demands that he should rebuke and disown the pro-Boers. This he did much more actively in private than was generally known, and though, as the sequel showed, his sympathies were much more with the left wing than with the right, he laboured honestly to keep the peace until after the 1900 election. Then his deliberate view was that, since the party would have several years in which to cool its heels, and set its house in order, it had better go free and not bottle up its dissensions.

The transactions of these years are in large part what Morley used to call "dead meat," but they have at least one point of interest for the student of the subsequent years. The Liberal party was more than once threatened with a schism which, if it had not completely thrown it out of action, must have entirely altered its character, if and when it returned to power. Had this schism actually taken place, Asquith and Grey would have been shut off from co-operation with the rest of the Party, and it is extremely probable that neither of them would have held the places they subsequently did in a Liberal Government, if indeed, any Liberal Government had been possible. What consequences might have followed not only to this country but to the world, is beyond conjecture, but looking back on the history of this time, one has an uncanny feeling of the future brooding over the party struggles.

There were two highly critical moments for the Liberal party in these years. The first was in July, 1901, after C. B.'s "methods of barbarism" speech and the ridiculous "war to the knife and fork," in which the different sections of the party dined at each other for several weeks in succession. C. B. adroitly turned that situation by summoning a party meeting and demanding a vote of confidence, which even the stalwarts of Liberal Imperialism were not ready to refuse. The other critical moment was in March, 1902, after Rosebery's "definite separation" announcement and the consequent formation of the Liberal League, which C. B. regarded as an organization challenging his authority and definitely dividing the party. In that the situation was saved mainly through the efforts of Asquith, who pulled back the Leaguers from the position which their advanced guard wished to occupy. After this the unity of the party was secured and smooth running obtained through Balfour's education policy and Chamberlain's threat to Free Trade.

II

My own position during this time may have some slight interest for journalists. I was the only Liberal journalist, perhaps even the only Liberal politician, who kept touch throughout with both groups. My brother Liberal editors, Cook and Massingham, had burnt their boats early in the day on the one side or the other, and both suffered heavy and undeserved penalties for their convictions. I, on the contrary, seemed to be steering the unheroic course of the "smoother" who was oiling his own waters, and gibes were flung at me from both camps. It was, in reality, not quite so simple as it seemed, and my records show the trouble I was in during most of this time. Long argumentative letters from leaders and members of both groups urge me to go to the right or to the left, or warn me of the consequences of continuing on some path on which I am dangerously straying. Some of my correspondents are gentle and persuasive, others grieved and disappointed, others angry and reproachful. Even the cool and charitable Edward Grey breaks out at my "damnable misconstruction" of his speeches or Rosebery's. On the other side, Massingham follows up his slings at me in the *Chronicle* or the *Daily News* by strong outbursts of private remonstrance at my faithlessness and my feeble grasp of

Liberal principle. A few others are flattering and encouraging, and I read still with a sense of gratitude the letters which came frequently from Bryce and Acland and from the two staunch Liberal peers, Spencer and Ripon, who always had something wise and informing to contribute from their long experience. Looking back on it, I can only feel astonished at the pains which were bestowed on keeping one journalist in the straight path and hope that my replies showed a grateful spirit.

Some letters strike a personal note. I find an old friend asking seriously whether I could be on equally intimate terms, as apparently I was, with both Rosebery and C. B. without betraying one or the other and possibly both. Another warns me that the fact that I have been seen walking in Hyde Park* with Lord Rosebery is being commented on by the faithful, and begs me "for the sake of the weaker brethren" not to expose myself to misconstruction by "yielding to the temptation of his society when others are watching." She (for this time it is a lady) adds a little homily about the inequality of the conditions between a man in Rosebery's position and a man in mine, and the subtle dangers to which the journalist is exposed in a relation of this kind. But I became equally suspect with the other group for associating with people like Stead and Labouchere; and my refusal to exclude left-wing letters and articles from the *Westminster* brought me repeated remonstrances from their opponents. "Isn't the game played out? When are you going to give it up? Don't you at last see that all this smoothing and prevaricating is hopeless and useless, and that you have got to make up your mind to the inevitable schism and choose one side or the other?" These were the questions which, as the war continued into the second and third year, came more and more insistently from both camps.

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* On one occasion a London Letter writer reported that Lord Rosebery and I had been seen walking together by the Serpentine the previous day and were apparently in deep and animated conversation about the political situation. What we had been discussing that day was the proper behaviour towards magpies. We had just spied the one rather dishevelled magpie which used to haunt that spot, and Rosebery had gone forward and taken off his hat to it. I remonstrated and said he ought not to have seen it, since one magpie was unlucky. He said on the contrary that one magpie was most lucky if you saluted it properly. I retorted by quoting the old rhyme, "One for sorrow and two for mirth," and he said that was a Saxon superstition and quite wrong.

III

In a letter, dated November 3rd, 1900, Morley writes: "Your endeavours to establish Liberal unity have never been surpassed since the man who composed the Athanasian creed, whoever he was, and I watch them grimly." I must have asked for elucidation, for three days later he writes in another letter, "To watch grimly is not to disapprove, or to play the ill-natured censor, or to be impracticable, or perhaps anything beyond the frame of mind of the elder brother of the Prodigal Son. Only you are an elder brother, too." This, I suppose, was an allusion to certain articles I was writing urging Liberal leaders to bury the hatchet and come together on the common ground of a Liberal policy for the peace in South Africa, which then seemed to be much nearer than it actually was. This "elder-brother-of-the-prodigal" feeling, dating from the spent feuds of 1896 and 1898, was precisely what, as I saw it, was ruining the Liberal party. Each group seemed to think that honour or dignity required a profession of repentance from the other and a promise of submission to something supposed to be the true faith for the future. This from my point of view was childish and exasperating. The one urgent necessity, as I saw it, was to keep the Liberal party strong and whole through these times, so that, when the war ended, a conciliatory policy should be secured for South Africa and the reactions which usually followed military success be avoided at home. Blot out the past and look to the future was the smoother's refrain.

This view was justified in the end, but the groundwork required something more than the burial of the quarrel about the origins of the war; it required the acceptance of at least one of the consequences of the war, namely the annexation of the Boer States. I had never had any doubts about this. It seemed to me as much in the interests of the Boers as of the British that, if war had to be, it should end decisively in this respect, and South Africa get at least the advantage of unity under one flag. But the advocacy of this opinion, which began cautiously in the *Westminster* from the beginning of the war, caused another cross-current, and on this issue I found myself for a time in collision with both Imperialists and pro-Boers, the first of whom vigorously disclaimed the idea that they were coquetting with annexation, and the second of whom denounced the very thought as a crime. I was much relieved to discover that, unknown to myself, I was expressing C. B.'s own thoughts on this subject, and that he was strongly of opinion that Liberal energy should not be expended on a vain protest against the inevitable, but be reserved for enforcing a Liberal settlement under the flag. It required much spade-work even among the centre of the party to prepare the way for the declaration on this subject which C. B. made at Glasgow in June, 1900, and I think I was able to help a little in this respect. There was strong resistance to the last, and the "gloomy and reluctant consent" which Morley signified, in a letter to *The Times*, was scarcely extracted from the pro-Boers, and to the very last moment Morley himself had seemed immovable.

There was little to be done in 1900 and 1901 except keep hammering away and make the best of a bad job. The wonder, looking back on it, is not that the Liberal party did badly in the Khaki Election, but that it did relatively so well. Chamberlain had not thought of the coupon device which wiped the party out in 1918, but it was caught in the same kind of patriotic storm then as later, and Tory electioneers went all lengths in proving a vote for a Liberal to be a vote for the enemy. We turned out much electioneering material from the *Westminster* office, and I wrote a pamphlet on the whole South African question which had the good fortune to win the warm approval of Morley without offending the Liberal Imperialists. This, I think, was my high-water mark in smoothing. For the next twelve months the continuance of the war, when they had declared it to be over, made the Government unpopular without at all diminishing the unpopularity of the Opposition or abating its troubles. Then at last came what seemed to me a great and timely stroke for peace and Liberal policy in South Africa. This was Rosebery's Chesterfield speech delivered on December 16th, 1901. From that time to this I can remember no other speech outside Parliament which was awaited with such anxiety or had such immediate results, and I still think of it as one of the very few speeches in my lifetime which really influenced events. Rosebery, at this moment, reaped all the advantages of his detachment from parties. A dozen other men might have said the same things without the smallest response, but when the great Imperialist left his solitary furrow to plead for peace, the whole country listened and the Government could not be deaf.

My hopes ran high and I thought at last we should have an end of trouble. Here was something for which pro-Boer and Imperialist professed equal enthusiasm, and there seemed to be no reason why they should continue to quarrel. I was soon undeceived. In my zeal for unity I had, in commenting on the Chesterfield speech, passed lightly over certain passages about the domestic affairs of the party and concentrated on the South African parts. Harcourt, noting this, immediately asked me to come and see him and, taking up *The Times*, read out with acid emphasis just those passages which I had ignored, and asked me what I thought of them. I said I thought they were mere make-weights put in to pacify the more ardent Liberal Imperialists, who might not otherwise have swallowed the Chesterfield doctrine. "No," he said, "I know him a great deal better than you do, and I tell you seriously that he means mischief." I did not believe it and went a day or two later to C. B. and urged him, not for the first time, to make an overture to Rosebery. He was very doubtful about the wisdom of it, but eventually he went to Berkeley Square and got what he considered to be a severe snub for his pains. Whereupon Harcourt said in his audible way, "I told you so," and said it still more emphatically when Rosebery proceeded next to take the platform and, by reviving the old quarrels, to wipe the slate clean of the Chesterfield speech, so far as it affected his own fortunes with the Liberal party.

IV

All this was very difficult for the journalist who was labouring to keep the party together. My own thoughts were that it was highly desirable to bring Rosebery in, but imperative not to let him make a schism if he remained out. Pursuing this line, I had weathered all the storms up to the

Chesterfield speech, but I was nearly on the rocks during the next few months. Rosebery would not play the part assigned to him in my scheme. On the contrary, as Harcourt predicted, he took up and expanded all that part of the Chesterfield speech which was calculated to make trouble in the Liberal party and seemed to drop the other part which made for unity. Smoothing now seemed mischievous, and when he declared his "definite separation" from C. B., I wrote an article as definitely professing allegiance to C. B. Then the wrath descended on me and for a few days my position seemed to be nearly as precarious as that of my brother editors who had gone down in the previous years. My very good relations with Newnes, whom I was always careful not to take by surprise in any decision that I could foresee, carried me safely through, but he was genuinely distressed at the necessity which I saw for this particular decision and told me frankly that the strongest pressure was being put on him to secure its withdrawal. I was obliged to tell him that withdrawal would mean my retirement, and he very handsomely said that he would back my judgment against that of my critics.

A month or two later the peace came and we seemed at last to be in smoother waters. By the middle of 1903, Balfour and Chamberlain together, the one by his Education Bill and the other by his attack on Free Trade, had performed the miracle of reuniting the Liberal party, and Rosebery was as hot on the new scent as C. B. or Asquith. My hopes revived that they would all be in one fold when the Election came. I did not think of Rosebery as Prime Minister in a Liberal Government—his disabilities as a Peer, let alone the claims of C. B., seemed to preclude that—but I did think of him as Foreign Secretary and, knowing his views, I thought him more likely than anyone else to steer a prudent course between the European Alliances. But this, too, became a fading dream. Rosebery was always being reconciled and always relapsing, and no one could discover what he wished or what he would do. Again and again I was asked to find out, if I could, and Rosebery lent himself to cross-examination with unfailing good humour, but always in the end I retired baffled and had to report that no one would know till the last minute of the twelfth hour. And no one did.

CHAPTER X

THE FREE TRADE CAMPAIGN

Something to Make a Blaze—Chamberlain's Campaign—Its Beginnings—An Article and the Reply—A Letter from Massingham—A Collective Effort—New Friends—Help from Lord Goschen—The Unionist Free Traders—Lord Courtney—Lord Cromer—The Irish Question—The Step-by-Step Policy.

I

TO look back on newspaper files is often to be reminded of the folly of prophesying. Yet I find a few lucky shots in the files of the *Westminster* during the year 1902, and in the *Contemporary Review*, for which I was then writing. Among other things I kept saying that Free Trade would shortly be in danger and that "from this quarter we might look for party developments undreamt of at the present time." Whether this was mother wit or inside information I cannot now remember, but I had often argued even in the previous years that a Protectionist reaction would certainly follow the war if the Liberal party were destroyed by its schisms. This was not quite a shot in the dark. Long before the war the Colonial Office had hummed with talk of an Imperial Zollverein, and though the meaning of that German word seemed to be very imperfectly understood, it was boldly declared to be something new and scientific as opposed to the effete shibboleths of Cobdenism. The war, for the time being, sent Chamberlain down another path, but no one who had watched his career could have doubted that, as soon as it was over, he would be off on a new tack, and this particular novelty had so much in it to catch his eye and please his fancy that the choice of it for the next "stunt" seemed highly probable.

The late Lord Salisbury was supposed to have said, in a phrase much repeated at this time, that any fool with a match could set the Tory party in a blaze about Protection. Chamberlain was no fool, and he was beyond doubt a convinced Protectionist, but something to make a blaze was exactly what he wanted at this moment. He saw the country sick of the war and the pendulum swinging violently towards a Radical reaction. He thought the Education Bill with its challenge to Nonconformists a gratuitous piece of folly, and, according to current rumour, had departed on his visit to South Africa in high dudgeon at being overruled about it. There was nothing to cheer him in South Africa, and he came back worsted in his effort to make the Rand magnates pay a share in the cost of the war. His political fortunes never looked darker than when he returned to England in February, 1902. But his friends said, "Wait, he will turn the tables on you before you know where you are. He has not the smallest intention of just sitting still and letting the pendulum swing or the Party drift to perdition."

If a diversion was what he sought, he could not have succeeded better. I remember nothing quite like the sensation caused by his speech at Birmingham on May 15th, in which he declared food taxes and Preference to be essential to the Empire, and said flatly that he intended this to be the issue at the next Election. On the very same day Balfour had defended the repeal of the shilling corn tax in the House of Commons by arguments which cut right across the Birmingham speech. The Liberal journalist the next day was in the fortunate position of having nothing to do except set the two speeches against each other—a pastime which was often renewed during the next two and a half years. The tables were indeed turned, but not quite in the sense that Chamberlain's friends intended. The party journalist who had for years been exercising his ingenuity to cover up similar performances by his own leaders was at last free to apply his talents to Cabinet Ministers, who were now opening their guns on each other with none of the excuse that freedom and irresponsibility gave the men in Opposition.

This in itself was refreshment and relief, and all Liberal journalists, I think, offered up a silent prayer of gratitude to Chamberlain. But at the time we were by no means sure that he was not going to catch the voters. His spade-work had been well done, and the Birmingham speech was followed up immediately by an intensive campaign. I myself (and I imagine also my brother Liberal journalists) received visits from earnest Tariff Reformers, who assured me that the last thing that Chamberlain wished or intended was to make the new issue a party question. He was said to be gravely disturbed about the condition of the Empire and to see no way of keeping it together except by the method he proposed. Would not I, as a patriotic man, put party aside and be ready to make what might be an economic sacrifice for a great imperial end? Letters followed from "economists" who said that they had made a study of the facts and come to the conclusion that Mill's exception for infant industries could be applied to the Colonies without making a serious breach in Free Trade principles. They earnestly advised me to keep what was called an open mind. Then came rumours that the faithful were succumbing to these blandishments. Lifelong Liberals, especially in the north of England, were said to be wavering. One or two conversions were publicly announced, and other professing Liberals wrote (in rather suspicious numbers) to say that they were in trouble about their souls, and though they hoped to be able to remain firm, they were in a serious perplexity about certain points about which they hoped the *Westminster* would reassure them. Everything possible was done to create an atmosphere of wobbling and wavering, and the by-elections which followed the Birmingham speech seemed to indicate a distant slackening of the tide which, until then, had been racing against the Government.

Chamberlain and his friends were in high spirits and declared openly that if they were given a year they would sweep the country. They had given themselves a good start, and were soon flooding the newspapers and the clubs with their propagandist literature. In June, "Calchas"—no other than J. L. Garvin—produced in the *Fortnightly Review* what was evidently a full, careful and inspired statement of the Chamberlain case. It was, like everything from that hand, extremely well and effectively written, and fortified by elaborate statistics, wearing the appearance of profound research into the records of at least thirty years. This caused a great flutter and was loudly declared to be irrefutable and conclusive. I was asked to answer it for the next number of the same Review, which meant that I had only ten days for the job, or to be accurate only what remained of ten days after I had done my necessary work of editing the W. G.

It seemed hopeless, and would have been, if Reginald McKenna, then and in after years one of my most intimate friends, had not been at hand to help. During those ten days he and I went through together the whole of the trade records of the thirty years, on which Chamberlain's case was built up, checking every figure, making new discoveries of our own, and finally producing what we thought to be a smashing answer. It was his work quite as much as mine, and when he refused to share the credit I was in great doubt whether my name ought to go to it, and but for the insistence of others that such an article ought to be signed, it would have appeared anonymously. Apart from the results, this ten days' work with McKenna was invaluable to me as a journalist, it anchored me to the facts, compelled me to face the worst that could be said by the other side, and enabled me from that time onwards to find my way about the *selva selvaggia* of the official trade records. It was the habit of Tariff Reformers in those days to say that their modern instances were met by the muttering of ancient shibboleths, but this was really not true of the Free Traders with whom I was associated. We tried to meet every allegation of fact on its own merits, and the Free Trade Union which was shortly set up with McKenna for its secretary soon became an indefatigable and well-equipped research laboratory.

II

The *Westminster* got much credit for its Free Trade propaganda, and my letter bag for the next year was an agreeable contrast with that of the previous year. Grateful appreciations of modest services came from eminent people who till then had been far from approving. The reader shall be spared the repetition of these, but I cannot forbear to print one which gave me extraordinary pleasure. It was from my brother journalist, Massingham, till then perhaps the severest of my critics :—

> 34 Grosvenor Road, S.W.
>
> Dear Spender,—I feel impelled to write you a line to congratulate you on the really remarkable success and power of your Free Trade propaganda. Not only does it seem to me to be by far the best thing in journalism, but it is, I am sure, turning out to be a very notable service to the State. It is the theme of universal praise, and I thought you might like to know, as journalists, though they write much about other people, don't always learn what other people say about them.—Yours very truly, H. W. Massingham.

Massingham had often made me wince, and did again before the chapter was ended, but he never failed in generosity to fellow journalists and appreciation of their craftsmanship, when he thought it good. What was more, he took the trouble to write and tell his brother-labourer at the oar the good things he thought about him.

When one of his tame editors had reprinted a flattering reference to himself from another paper, Bismarck sharply told him not to misbehave himself in that way again. So let me try to extenuate this offence by adding at once that only a small part of this compliment really belonged to me. Frankly, I do think that the *Westminster's* contribution to Free Trade in those years was pretty good, but it was a collective effort of a kind which is seldom available to the journalist. Inside the office were Geake and Gould, Geake with his extraordinary memory for facts and figures and his rapid mathematical mind; Gould, who was a first-class politician as well as draughtsman, and whose skill in simplifying complicated things and giving vivid and humorous expression to what in other hands were dreary generalities, has never been surpassed. Working together in leading articles, notes and cartoons, we converged on our theme from different angles, and were able to avoid the dullness which seemed inherent in the subject. Gould's "Mad Hatter" and "Alice in Blunderland" compelled even Tariff Reformers to laugh, and were soon spread all over the country through the provincial Press; and with Geake's aid, there was no statistical conundrum, among the scores that were thrown at us day by day, to which we were not ready with at least a provisional answer.

But also outside the office we had a wide circle of helpers. Night after night Reginald McKenna came back from the House of Commons to 45 Sloane Street, where we were then living, bringing with him his brother, Ernest, who had as wise and cool a brain as any politician. We sat often till the small hours debating the last phase and the next phase, hammering out the solutions of the conundrums which had puzzled us in the day. McKenna, too, kept me in touch with all the comings and goings of the party in Parliament, and the latest rumours from the other side. Thus primed, I produced weekly the "Diary of Greville Minor"—afterwards collected and published as a book—which was supposed to give the inner history of the times, with special reference to the convulsions going on in the Unionist party. Parts of this turned out to be so accurate that I was asked angrily who was the traitor in the camp. In nine cases out of ten there was no "traitor." I had simply made shots in the dark which happened to hit the target. This is far easier than is generally supposed, for the motives of politicians are few and simple, and the action that they will and must take in given circumstances can nearly always be deduced with certainty by those who know the rules of the game. The form of this diary enabled me to avoid the hedging which necessarily accompanies these deductions when they are produced as "news," but the bold statement of them as fact was nearly always a bluff on the substratum of truth which McKenna and other of my Parliamentary friends supplied. Part of it was deliberately contrived to "draw" the other side, and in that it had considerable success.

But in addition to old friends, the threat to Free Trade brought many new ones. In the first eighteen months of the campaign the Free Trade Unionists joined hands with us with the zeal, not of converts, but of men prepared to make every sacrifice for the old faith. Many of these were soon in close touch with the *Westminster*. To this day I remember my surprise when the door of my room in Tudor Street opened one afternoon and Lord Goschen walked in unannounced—Goschen, who was thought to be the most exclusive and retiring of the elder statesmen, and of all living men the least likely to join hands with a Radical journalist. He went straight to the point, said he was uncompromising on this issue and would do anything to help me at the *Westminster* with his pen, or the cause by speeches in public. We talked for an hour or more and I remember earnestly advising him to prepare a new edition of his book on foreign exchanges brought up to date for the new controversy. I promised to do my utmost to get him material for this purpose, and he seemed to be seriously taken with the idea, and I think would have pursued it if his health had not failed. But I remained in close touch and correspondence with him, and he was always ready with hints, criticisms and useful warnings about the things which could and could not be done with the Unionist Free Traders.

Goschen invited me to dine with him one night in September, 1903, to meet Ritchie and Lord George Hamilton, who had just resigned from the Government as part of the singular transaction by which Balfour had discarded them and kept the Duke of Devonshire. I have not a record of the date, but it must have been about September 20th, for it was in the short interval in which the Duke still remained in the Government. I remember a certain disappointment on this occasion. Both men were supposed to be deeply wounded, and preparing to take off the gloves against the Prime Minister. So far from this, they seemed to be overflowing with charity and brotherly love. They told their story substantially as it afterwards became known, but when Goschen began to comment somewhat forcibly, they immediately checked him, suggested excuses and palliations, and said that no one who had not been in the Cabinet could understand the strain under which they had all been labouring for the past six months. More than any other single occasion that evening brought home to me two things which it was very important for a Liberal journalist to understand at that moment—first, the extraordinary personal influence which Balfour had with the Conservatives of pure lineage, and next, that the Conservative Free Traders had durable ties with their party which would almost certainly take them back to it as soon as they thought that Free Trade was safe.

Winston Churchill, with his usual vivid perception of things, saw this, and quite early in the day decided to come right over to the Liberal side. He knew that if he waited to act with a Tory Free Trade group he would never act. He was quickly one of us, bringing colour and animation to our counsels, and abounding in plans for pushing propaganda. Now and again I helped him with material for speeches, and I find a friendly letter of the year 1903, in which he thanks me for this assistance. "I added a tail of my own," he says, "and I hope you will think that the join was skilfully smoothed over." The circumstances have passed from my memory, but that Winston at any time of his life did no more than "add a tail of my own" to anything supplied to him by anybody else remains wholly incredible to me.

Other secessionists with whom I became intimate at this time were Lord James of Hereford, Lord Balfour of Burleigh and Arthur Elliot. James was consumed with zeal; he could think of nothing and talk of nothing but Free Trade; he was ready to go anywhere and do anything and to blot out all our iniquities as Home Rulers if he could save Free Trade. I saw him often, and broke my vow not to make speeches, and went on to a platform with him at one or two meetings. In return he took up his pen and wrote certain (unsigned) contributions to the W. G. Balfour of Burleigh was an altogether different kind of man. He seemed to be in real trouble about the state of the country and the perversity of the Unionist party, but his convictions about Free Trade were often too deep for words and to that extent less serviceable to the journalist whose trade requires him to be vocal. But occasionally he too looked in at nights on our conclaves in Sloane Street, and lent us a sympathetic, if rather astonished support. As editor of the *Edinburgh Review*, Arthur Elliot had his own row to hoe as a journalist, and one met him on equal terms as a fellow-writer, in which capacity he was equally charming and helpful.

At a little distance was Lord Courtney, who was unique among men in his power of combining the austerity of the judge with the vehemence of the partisan. He and his wife had been exceedingly kind to me as a young man, when we were near neighbours in Chelsea, but I had a little fallen out of favour with him during the Boer War, and Morley used sometimes to tell me how heartily his "brother sage of Chelsea" agreed with his own strictures on "the smoother." I was in consequence a little shy of approaching him during these years, for though he was always tolerant and good-humoured he had a way of conveying disapproval which made conversation embarrassing. I went oftener to Cheyne Walk when the war ended and Tariff Reform set in, and, of course, he abounded in the true faith. But he was the veteran and we were the neophytes, and his encouragement was tempered with correction. I have a note written apparently after a Sunday afternoon call recording that he had admonished me "never to use a bad argument in a good cause." I daresay I deserved it, but it was a little quenching to a journalist hot on the scent, and I have annotated it, *tanto buon che val niente*—so good as to be no good at all. Certainly the journalist who never used a bad argument would have been no good at all to either side in the fiscal controversy between 1902 and 1906.

Though the quality of mercy is not strained, the quality of justice sometimes is, and occasionally one felt the strain in Courtney's presence. C. B. used to speak of the "*Atrox Courtneyi animus*," and though he explained that he used the epithet in a purely Horatian and complimentary sense, he rolled the *r* in a rather ominous way. Courtney, like Cato, of whom the epithet was used, undoubtedly required a formidable adjective, and even politicians who sincerely admired him trembled a little at the thought of his being in office with them. This kept him above the battle rather than in it during the last years of his life, but he was—to borrow another expression of C. B.'s—"a great old fellow," and we all had unbounded respect for his courage and uprightness and the stoicism with which he bore the disaster of failing eyesight.

Another indefatigable helper in the later years was Lord Cromer, who asked me to come and see him during one of his vacations from Egypt, and spoke with real alarm about Chamberlain's campaign and its probable effect on British foreign policy. Like James, he was uncompromising in the faith and would listen to none of the concessions that some of the Unionist Free Traders were willing to make to avoid a schism in their party. I saw him many times after his return from Egypt, and he wrote me long and careful letters on special points, the substance of which was conveyed into the *Westminster*. I have heard him called arbitrary by some who were associated with him in Egypt, but I never found him anything but modest and genial, and he discussed philosophy and scholarship with the same zest and discursiveness as he did the fiscal question or foreign affairs. Had he devoted himself to classical studies in youth, he would undoubtedly, in the technical sense, have been a fine scholar, and it was extremely interesting to see him in his old age starting on Latin and Greek authors and bringing to bear on them the fresh and original judgment of a seasoned man of affairs.

III

None of us at the beginning of 1903 imagined that Balfour's Government could last the best part of three years, and least of all, I suppose, Balfour himself. The story of his nine lives has been sufficiently told, and the tribute paid to his skill and adroitness is not exaggerated. But it was the Tory Free Traders who saved him, and for the reasons that I suggested just now. They were sincerely devoted to their party, and as the situation developed, accepted Hicks-Beach's view that Free Trade was not only safe, but so much more than safe that a sweeping Radical triumph threatening all manner of Conservative interests was now the danger. Hence to keep Balfour in and rally to the party till the storm had blown over seemed now their duty. They were right in their diagnosis, but wrong, I think, in their treatment. The mischief was done when Chamberlain launched his policy, and from that moment, as Mr. Baldwin discovered in very similar circumstances twenty years later, the Parliament was dead. An Election in 1903 or 1904 would probably have given a far more favourable result to the Tory party than the Election of 1906, when the agony had been prolonged for three years and the public had learnt to laugh at the manœuvres by which the Government was kept alive. The Unionist Free Traders contributed immensely to the defeat of Chamberlainism by their action in the early years, but they had done their work too well to be able to limit the result when it seemed to be going too far.

The diary I kept during these years reflects the emotions on our side, the hopes, fears and disappointments which alternatively buoyed us up and cast us down. We set endless traps; we spent hours on devising resolutions which even Balfour would not be able to evade, and yet he always did somehow get away. We were at times much exasperated, but fell back on laughing at our own plight and his inexhaustible skill. Gould was superb at that, and his cartoons, which were now appearing in a hundred papers, sent a stream of light raillery all over the country. When the end came, we of the *Westminster* could, I think, fairly claim to have contributed something to it, but all the Liberal papers had played the same tune during the three years on Free Trade at all events, and they had been powerfully reinforced by certain Unionist papers, especially the *Spectator*, in which St. Loe Strachey kept on unflinchingly and most courageously when many of his political friends were picking their way back into the Conservative camp.

IV

But it would be a mistake to suppose that while this outward discipline was maintained, all was easy within the Liberal tabernacle. The healing of the South African schism brought new problems on which there was much searching of heart. In front of us was the Irish question, of which Rosebery wished to "clean the slate" and for which Morley stood grimly on guard. Even the staunchest Home Rulers did not see their way clear. The party had twice gone to destruction with Gladstonian Home Rule; was it a third time to dash its head into that brick wall? Did honour require it, was it even in the interests of Ireland that British Liberalism should be smashed and Free Trade sacrificed in a vain attempt to compel John Bull to do what he was so manifestly determined not to do? But, on the other hand, could the Irish vote be retained, or even prevented from going into violent opposition, if there were any evident backsliding on the Liberal side?

In the light of after events there is no credit to be squeezed out of the transactions of these years for any British politicians, and for my own small part in them as a journalist I can only plead in palliation that the circumstances were extraordinarily difficult. Looking back, I think the Liberal party ought in these years to have retained full liberty to use any Liberal victory in the way that seemed best for Ireland when the time came, and not to have been frightened into tying its own hands by its opponents' efforts to exploit the unpopularity—or supposed unpopularity—of Home Rule. But with so many other things at stake this seemed too heroic, and instead we began searching for a formula which would disarm Rosebery, appease John Bull, and yet not alienate the Irish.

The problem would have warmed the heart of a post-war negotiator, and we went into it with zest and presently came out with the "step-by-step" solution. There was to be no complete Home Rule in the next Parliament, but only a step which, if not justified by results, might be retraced, and, if justified, followed by other steps until the complete goal was reached. This left the Home Ruler free to say that his eye was still on the final goal, while it gave the anti-Home Ruler an assurance that nothing would be done on the strength of his vote which could not be undone if it proved dangerous. I began propounding this solution in the last months of 1902 and came quickly into collision with Morley, who reported that the Irish would not stand it. But his own counsel was not very helpful. "If we talk 'step by step,' " he wrote, "the Irish will be bound to put us out, and it is true that if we don't talk 'step by step,' John Bull will never let us in." I have a note of an outburst of Morley's against a speech of Rosebery's and of his warm assurance that I was mistaken in thinking it was "taken calmly" (an expression I appear to have used in writing about it in the W.G.). "The calm is by no means shared by two of those on whom the party most depends. It is a really contemptible exhibition." This was not a promising start. Morley said summarily that he had "done with the Rosebery combination."

I find him, nevertheless, writing a year later that "Rosebery has struck a first-class platform note" on the Tariff question, and in the interval the anathematized combination had begun to look more hopeful. But the Irish difficulty still persisted, and Morley himself had nothing better to offer than the aforesaid dilemma, which promised perdition either way. Indeed, he too, when it came to the point, was of opinion that any strong line in either direction would be ruinous at this stage. The deciding facts were that C. B. himself was now leaning towards "step by step," and that the Irish had not the insuperable objection to it that Morley supposed. I spent many hours during these years in the little room on the third floor of No. 6, Grosvenor Place, in which C. B. talked politics and prepared speeches, and I know how much he hated having to yield an inch on the Irish question, but he did yield for the sake of peace, though characteristically putting in a proviso of his own that no "step should be inconsistent with the advance to complete Home Rule." This was finally the solution agreed by all the leaders which C. B. propounded in his Stirling speech at the end of November, 1905, and which Rosebery so sensationally denounced in his Bodmin speech in that month. The Irish, of course, did not like it, and a talk with Redmond, in 1904, led me to think that he would never consent to it. But he and they had an attachment to C. B., and a confidence in him which led them to take from him what they would probably have taken from no one else, not even Morley.

The whole thing was wrong and justifies reflections on the timidity of politicians and their lack of faith in their own causes. It led to the fiasco of the Irish Councils Bill in 1907 and the postponement of the real issue until the Liberal tide had half run out and lacked the force to overcome the opposition of the die-hard Unionists. Looking back, I feel that this was one of the occasions on which a journalist ought not to have busied himself with the doings of politicians behind the scenes or joined in their hunt for formulas, but to have taken a simple line on the merits of the question as seen from outside and pursued it unflinchingly. This simple line should, I think, have been that the Liberal party should not fetter itself by any disabling pledges, but boldly ask the public to trust it to do the best for Ireland according to its circumstances and capacities when returned to power. When C. B. said at the Albert Hall that Balfour's Government had lived on tactics and died of tactics he was rather sharply told that he was living on tactics, so far at least as the Irish question was concerned. There was some force in the retort, but the political leaders could plead necessities from which the journalist was, or ought to have been, free.

* * * * *

During 1903 I was much thrown in with the Boer leaders who had come to London to secure the best terms they could for reconstruction and the reinstatement of their people on their farms in South Africa. They were still sore and bitter, but Botha from the beginning seemed to have quite clear ideas about the conditions upon which reconciliation was possible, and he always enabled one to be hopeful about the future. He came one night to dine with us, bringing Wessels and two other friends whose names I have forgotten, and we sat till midnight going over the whole ground and listening to thrilling tales of the war. Botha never failed to let us know when he came again in the subsequent years, and it was always a pleasure to see him, and to be able to trace in his thoughts the influence of the Liberal policy which led to the final reconciliation and the union of South Africa. I have heard surprise and even incredulity expressed at the phrase I quoted from him in the Life of Campbell-Bannerman : "three words made union and peace in South Africa—'methods of barbarism.' " My memory is quite clear on the point and is fortified by a precise record of the occasion in 1909 when he used this language. The phrase was thrown out in intimate talk and will not bear hammering too heavily, but I think it expressed two things which were always in his mind in after days. First his warm gratitude to Campbell-Bannerman, who had braved obloquy to say this thing, and next his feeling that the possibility of its being said in the heat of war-time implied some quality in British statesmen and the British people which made peace and co-operation with them far easier than it would have been with almost any other former enemies. Botha in an extraordinary degree combined the warm heart with the cool head and the long view, and it would have been well for Europe if there had been one man like him to play the same part after the Great War as he played after the South African War.

CHAPTER XI

THE DAYS OF DECEMBER, 1905

A Visit to Lord Spencer—C. B. and Cabinet-Making—His "Soundings"—Rosebery's Intervention—C. B. and Rosebery—A Serious Hitch—Attitude of Grey and Haldane—Lady C. B.'s Decision—Bryce and the Irish Secretaryship—C. B. and Morley—An Ungratified Ambition.

I

THE ranks of the veterans were sadly thinned during the years of the Free Trade controversy. Harcourt, Kimberley, Goschen and Spencer all either passed from the scene or were stricken with mortal illness. Spencer had been one of the kindest of friends to me, and in many a difficult moment I had been cheered and encouraged by his friendly word. I was often at Spencer House, and I think I must have been the last politician to see him before the stroke which threw him suddenly out of action in October, 1905. He asked me to stay with him in a little house he had in North Norfolk, where he was alone with his sister, Lady Sarah Spencer, taking, as he said, "an after-cure after the cure at Nauheim." When I arrived at the station I was met by a small brougham with an immense horse which bolted the whole three miles back to the house and landed me finally in the stable yard. I thought my last hour had come, but Spencer, who had watched this eccentric arrival from a window, was very cheerful about it. He said he had rather expected an incident of some kind when he sent that particular horse to meet me, and seemed to think it an interesting case of the equine temperament. I was assured that the animal, though high-spirited, had the best intentions. I spent three days with Spencer and felt, as always, the pleasure of being in the company of a very great gentleman. He talked intimately about the state of politics and the composition of the Liberal Government which was now coming to be taken for granted. Certain impressions I bore away which may or may not have been well-founded. One was that, though the most modest and unassuming of men, he still thought of Campbell-Bannerman as his junior, as in the old days when he was Viceroy and C. B. Chief Secretary outside the Cabinet. There was nothing to which C. B. would more heartily have assented, for his respect and affection for Spencer were unbounded, and he on his side still had the habit of thinking of Spencer as his chief. But I felt some slight misgiving as to what the result might be if this theory were tested in the formation of the Government, for I knew how strong the feeling in the party was that C. B. and no other should have the first place, willing as he might have been to yield to Spencer.

Spencer had his provisional list, and he told me of various alternative schemes for filling the highest places and discussed with much frankness the claims of various new and junior men to come into the Government. He despaired of Rosebery, said that he had asked him whether he would be Colonial Secretary and been met with a definite refusal. There was apparently some little misunderstanding about this, for when I inquired in other quarters I was assured that no definite offer had been made to Rosebery and therefore that no definite refusal had been given. But it was evidently in Spencer's mind that all efforts to bring Rosebery in were useless, and he gave me to understand that his decision and C. B.'s was that they could not put themselves in the position of making further overtures which were sure to be rejected.

He appeared to be very active and vigorous; he took long rides alone, drove me over to Holkham and spoke of plans for shooting the following week. I ventured a remonstrance, saying that I had heard that a cure at Nauheim was a very exhausting thing and needed discretion afterwards, but he passed it lightly and said he had seldom felt better. Three or four days later came the news that he was stricken. I never saw him again, but I retain an ineffaceable impression of his stately presence and charming manners, his serenity, dignity and openness of mind. It was customary to call him a Whig, but he had hardly any of the marks of that tribe except that he was a great nobleman and loved horses. In all essentials he was a genuine Liberal.

II

Though the news went out to him that everything at home was heading for a crisis, it was with the greatest difficulty that C. B. could be got back from his autumn wanderings in the year 1905. He had always regarded a certain number of weeks at Marienbad and certain more weeks for an after-cure as his inalienable right, and there was nothing to which he had offered a more impenetrable passive resistance than the efforts of Whips and colleagues to encroach on it. This year he was even more passive than usual, and in spite of plain intimations from King Edward (in their talks at Marienbad) that he would be sent for when the time came, he stretched his holiday till well on in November. When finally he did return he went straight to his house in Scotland, disregarding all warnings that the hour was at hand. He had heard that tale a hundred times before and simply would not believe that, after surviving all the perils of the session, Balfour would throw up the sponge because Chamberlain had made an awkward speech at Plymouth. He did, however, rather reluctantly consent to "take soundings" among his intimates as to what he should do in that improbable event, and he exercised himself in a leisurely way on that ground until the end of November.

On Wednesday afternoon, November 30th, I had a note from Esher, who was intimate with King Edward, to say that Balfour would resign on the following Sunday or Monday, and that C. B. really must come to London. He said it was awkward to make communications of that kind officially, but begged me to tell Gladstone, the chief Liberal Whip, that C. B.'s presence in London was indispensable. I did so and found that Morley had received a similar communication and had telegraphed to C. B. in Scotland, but so far without result. He seemed immovable, and in spite of further urgent telegrams from Morley and Gladstone refused to budge until the Sunday night of December 3rd, when he took the night train from Scotland and arrived in Belgrave Square just as Balfour was resigning and a few hours before he was "sent for."

This was the characteristic C. B. He knew perfectly well what he was going to do. The "soundings" as to whether he should or should not take office before the Election were just to humour other people, and he never had the slightest doubt about his own intentions. And though, in forming his Government, he left a fairly wide margin for give and take, he was determined that certain people should have certain places, and that certain people should not have other places—e.g. that Reid should be Lord Chancellor, and (I think) that Morley should not be Foreign Secretary, and he was in no mood to expose himself a moment before it was necessary to the badgering and buttonholing which he knew would be his fate as soon as Government-forming set in. What followed I have endeavoured to set down accurately in his Life, but I may, perhaps, add one or two personal impressions more suited to this record.

Balfour's decision to resign and put the Liberals in before the Election has been much criticized in the light of what followed, but at the moment it seemed a clever and quite legitimate gamble. What precipitated it was, I imagine, Rosebery's Bodmin speech (November 25th, 1905), which had temporarily thrown the Liberal party back into its old confusion and brought the Irish question, which the Unionists thought to be the best of all possible diversions from Tariff Reform, once more into the foreground. At Bodmin, as I have already related, Rosebery suddenly, and entirely off his own bat, attacked C. B. for a passage on the Irish question in a speech he had recently made in Scotland, and declared "emphatically and explicitly" and "once for all" that he could not "serve under that banner." This seemed at the time a shattering blow, and for a few days it looked as if the unhappy party would be rent by another schism, just at the moment when its victory was in sight. But then it turned out that Rosebery's own friends, and especially Asquith and Grey, the Vice-Presidents of the still existing but long dormant Liberal League, of which he was President, had been consenting parties to C. B.'s declaration on Home Rule—so that the Bodmin speech hit them as hard as it hit C. B. Grey and Asquith, it appeared, had not told Rosebery of this transaction, and he had not consulted them about his speech. The truth was that by this time the League had become so unimportant for any practical purpose that its Vice-Presidents had simply forgotten its existence in their daily intercourse as colleagues with C. B. and the House of Commons front bench. But it still loomed large in Rosebery's mind, and he still seemed to take for granted that the Vice-Presidents would follow his lead, if and when he chose to declare himself.

Rosebery's conduct seemed to me inexcusable, and this time I closed the door with a bang, so far as the *Westminster* was concerned, and wrote the kind of leading article which would have estranged me from almost any other public man. But Rosebery, as usual, took no offence; on the contrary, he asked me to come and see him at the Durdans, as soon as he got back from Cornwall, and was as friendly and welcoming as ever, chaffing me gently at my discomfiture and saying seriously that he really understood and sympathized with what he knew must be my disappointment with him. We talked into the small hours of the morning and I got one ray of comfort. He was not, he assured me, going to lead any faction against C. B. in the coming Election. This at all events was reassuring, and he even held out the hope that if C. B. would not pursue the quarrel he would come out and do his part, at all events so far as Free Trade and other Liberal issues were concerned.

I was not hopeful about C. B. doing anything to help, but in the seemingly critical circumstances I felt obliged to let him know of this conversation, and I found him the following Monday in Belgrave Square just at the moment when he was expecting his summons to "kiss hands." The scene is still vividly in my memory. He was wearing a long frock coat with black trousers, and his hat was—rather oddly—on the table beside him with black gloves hanging out of it. The blinds were half drawn, and one might have thought the scene to be set for a funeral. But he was in the highest spirits and overflowing with little quips which never failed him in good times or bad. He said he was expecting a summons from

"Jupiter" (he nearly always spoke of King Edward as "Jupiter") and it might cause him to get up and leave me abruptly at any moment, but in the meantime he was very glad to have news of the "Lord" ("Barnbougle" or "the Lord" were his usual designations for Rosebery). Did he come this time with sword or olive branch? I made my unauthorized communication and left him to judge, saying what I could for the expediency of letting the Bodmin quarrel rest, even if he could not see his way to say anything soothing. Then he twinkled all over, as only C. B. could twinkle, and after some moments of apparent reflection delivered his ultimatum: "Will you please tell Lord Rosebery that within two hours from now I expect to have accepted the King's commission to form a Government, and that being so, I can obviously say no more about the Irish question until I have had an opportunity of consulting my colleagues in the Cabinet." There scarcely could have been a more skilful answer or the closing of a chapter with a more deadly politeness.

I learnt afterwards that I was supposed to be up to mischief. Morley spoke scornfully of my "operations" and warned C. B. not to be entrapped by them, but to show a proper resentment to all efforts to "knock him off his perch." There could have been no more unpromising adventure than to lay snares for C. B., who if one of the straightest was also one of the wariest of men, and nothing was farther from my thoughts. As for resentment, he was so evidently well satisfied with the situation that he neither felt it nor had the need to express it. Rosebery had put himself out of court, thrown the Liberal Imperialists into his arms and saved him from the embarrassment of having either to ask Rosebery or not to ask him to join the Government and the discontents which might have followed if he had done either of his own initiative. Rosebery was so unlike other politicians, and it was always so difficult to divine what he wished from what he did or said, that to this day I am uncertain whether he really intended to throw himself out when he made the Bodmin speech, or whether, if circumstances had shaped themselves a little differently, he would not willingly have served with C. B. either as Foreign Secretary or Colonial Secretary.

III

The fact that Rosebery had made himself impossible and that the truce they desired between him and C. B. was past praying for, undoubtedly weighed with Grey and Haldane in the difficulties they made during the formation of the Government. To them the whole balance seemed to be upset, and they seriously thought that the right way to redress it was for C. B. to go to the Lords and yield the leadership in the Commons to Asquith. Though they afterwards very handsomely admitted themselves to have been wrong, they had in pressing this demand a case which was much more reasonable at the time than it seemed afterwards. C. B. with all his qualities had not been an effective leader in the Commons. Balfour had had considerable success in "guying" him, and he had shown none of the subtlety and quickness which Opposition in the three previous years had demanded. Even his best friends had been obliged to admit that few other men of his abilities could make such bad speeches as he did when thrown off his stroke or confused by interruptions. Morley always spoke of him as an "unhandy man" in the House of Commons. Moreover, there were serious and well-founded doubts about his health. A letter from his favourite Marienbad physician, Dr. Ott, which reached London three days after the decision was taken, urges him to go to the Lords and practically tells him that, if he attempts to shoulder the double burden of the Prime Ministership and the Leadership in the Commons he will sentence himself to death. Incidentally, this letter reveals that in a consultation at Marienbad between him, Lady C. B. and Dr. Ott, "all three agreed" that it would be "best for you to go to the House of Lords besides occupying the Government." I should conjecture that since the decision had been taken, when it arrived, C. B. never showed this letter to his wife.

As it turned out, her intervention was decisive. Doubts have been expressed on that point, but the fact is incontestable. Grey went to C. B. on the Monday night, and though the idea of yielding to pressure was intensely disagreeable to him, he kept the door open all through Tuesday and the greater part of Wednesday. On the Wednesday afternoon it seemed more probable than not that he would consent, though he continued to say that there could be no decision until he had seen his wife, who was on her way from Scotland. She arrived in Belgrave Square on the Wednesday evening and immediately put her foot down. Whatever he might be willing to do for the sake of peace, it seemed to her intolerable that he should be dictated to and put on the shelf after all his work by men so much younger than himself as Grey and Haldane. Had the suggestion come from another quarter, it is more than possible that both he and she would have fallen in with it, but what rankled was that it seemed to be a new move in the old game of Liberal Imperialist and Little-Englander, the final attempt, as Morley said, "to knock him off his perch." I do not think he felt this so much about Grey as he did about Haldane—"Master Haldane," whom he had always regarded as the subtlest of his enemies and the principal troubler of the peace in the party. He was a little nettled at the stern sense of duty with which Grey came on that Monday night "all buttoned up," as he said, "and never undoing one button" to perform his disagreeable task, but Haldane he considered to be the author of the mischief, and submission to Haldane was what seemed detestable.

C. B.'s decision, delivered on the Thursday morning, produced the expected crisis. I may reproduce here the account I gave of it in my Life of C. B. :—

> I saw Mr. Gladstone (then Liberal Chief Whip) early in the afternoon of Thursday and learnt from him of Campbell-Bannerman's final refusal to go to the Lords, and agreed with him that it would probably bring the corresponding refusal from Sir Edward Grey. But there were still three days before the Cabinet list need be presented to the King, and I strongly urged that, whatever Grey's reply might be, the question should not be considered closed till the last minute of the twelfth hour, and begged Mr. Gladstone to use his influence with the Prime Minister to keep the Foreign Office open while Sir Edward Grey had an opportunity of talking the matter over with his friends, one of the oldest and most intimate of whom, Mr. (now Sir Arthur) Acland, was at hand. The broken communications were thus restored, and during the next six hours there were long and anxious consultations between Mr. Haldane and Sir Edward Grey at the former's residence in Whitehall Court, and between both of them and Mr. Acland at his flat in St. James's Court. At nine,

> word came out from the conclave that the door was half open, and a message was sent to Campbell-Bannerman repeating the suggestion that he should not fill either Foreign Office or War Office. But Mr. Haldane, who had used his influence against standing out, had anticipated the messenger and himself told the Prime Minister of the probable outcome of the reconsideration. He returned from Belgrave Square to Buckingham Court, and before midnight both he and Sir Edward Grey had made up their minds to come in. This resolution was not made easier by an article in *The Times* the following morning which recounted the circumstances accurately up to the time when Campbell-Bannerman received Sir Edward's letter, but was not informed of the change which took place later. For a moment it seemed as if the concordat was again in danger, but this obstacle also was overcome before mid-day, and it was generally known by Friday afternoon that Sir Edward Grey and Mr. Haldane were to join the Government.

Time was short, and I had a breathless chase after Acland that afternoon, but finally ran him down at the Board of Education, where he was presiding over a Departmental Committee; and in answer to my urgent note he found a deputy and came out, very willing to try his hand. Grey has since told us what chiefly weighed with him was the argument (put very strongly by Acland) that he really was not entitled to imperil the whole Liberal cause, and with it the Free Trade cause, by reviving the old differences at that moment. There was much speculation at the time as to how *The Times* had obtained the material for its article, for it contained details which were only known to a very few of the inner circle, and all of these must have been aware of the danger of publication while the story was unfinished. There was a great sigh of relief on the Saturday morning when this obstacle was surmounted, and, as usual in those days, a general scampering off to the country among those who had got what they wanted and were out of their pain.

But there were heavy disappointments. I met Bryce on the Friday afternoon and, in talk, spoke incidentally of the welcome news of Grey's coming in, supposing him to know all about it. To my surprise I found that he knew nothing, and what was more, that I had unwittingly dealt him a heavy blow. Not that he was in the least degree grudging or unfriendly about Grey; but C. B., it appeared, had constructed alternative lists, one on the hypothesis that Grey and Haldane would stay out; the other on the hypothesis that they would come in; and on the first of these Bryce had a place that he desired, and on the other he was designated for the Irish Chief Secretaryship, which he did not at all desire. Bryce, if any man, had given C. B. support and service in the bad times which seemed to merit any reward in reason when the time came. But in the manœuvring of the pieces he had got thrust into a corner, and there he had to stay. C. B. did these things with a certain ruthlessness if he thought them necessary. When Grey seemed to have ruled himself out as Foreign Secretary, he thought first of Cromer, who declined on the ground of health, then successively of Burghclere and Fitzmaurice, but in the end he all but omitted Fitzmaurice, and though he offered the Foreign Under-Secretaryship to Burghclere, he interpreted as a refusal a letter which Burghclere had intended to be an acceptance. There were other oddities. For instance, Loulou Harcourt, who was one of the oldest and kindest of my political friends, had worked with him as an extra Private Secretary during the week of Government-making, but was never told whether he was to be offered any place. I went on the Saturday to spend the week-end with him and his wife at North Mimms, and on coming into the house congratulated him and her on his appointment as First Commissioner of Works. That was the first he had heard of it, and until he got his summons to a Privy Council he heard no more.

Looking backwards, it is pretty evident that we were all under an illusion in supposing that the defection of any group or the appointment of one man rather than another to the Foreign Office or the War Office would have affected the result of the Election. The Liberal tide, as it turned out, was irresistible, and nothing could have prevented the Party from obtaining an enormous majority. But once more, as in the previous years, the personal incidents were immensely more important than any of us dreamt of. If some one else than Grey had been Foreign Secretary, and Haldane had not been at the War Office to create the Expeditionary Force and the Territorial Army, the whole history of this country and perhaps even of the world might have been different. Trivial as in one sense were the incidents of that Thursday afternoon, they seem in the retrospect to have been big with fate. Most of us wanted Grey to be Foreign Secretary, but we were not thinking of that, or at all events not of that chiefly; we were thinking of the effect on the Party if he declined to come in. This would, as things turned out, have been of little importance, but the fact that he was Foreign Secretary proved to be all-important.

IV

Though it escaped notice at the time, C. B.'s attitude to Morley was by no means the least interesting part of the personal by-play. I said just now that it was one of C. B.'s fixed points that Morley should not be Foreign Secretary, and this, I think, is true. Morley had made no secret of the fact that he desired the place in 1894, or that he considered himself injured when Rosebery denied it to him. From intimations I had in the week before the Government was formed in 1905, I drew the conclusion that this was still his desire, and I believe he conveyed it, though in a roundabout way, to C. B. before the Cabinet-making began. Up to the last moment he was protesting against the "feather-weights" whom C. B. was supposed to be contemplating for this place when Grey seemed to have made himself impossible. Not a few of C. B.'s own friends thought that his proper retort to Grey would have been immediately to appoint Morley to the Foreign Office, and undoubtedly it was the obvious and superficially effective way out. But C. B. always turned the blind eye to any hint or suggestion leading in that direction. He would give Morley anything else, load him with honours, if he desired them, but he would not make him Foreign Secretary.

It was a perfectly legitimate ambition on Morley's part, but quite early in his career he had come under the tacit ban ruling in both parties which decreed that certain kinds of politicians had an inherent disqualification for this office. In the Tory party it fell on men who were supposed to be rash in judgment or overbearing in manners (and all but excluded Curzon); in the Liberal party, on impenitent members of the Manchester school who were supposed to hold strong Little-England or anti-Imperialist views. Morley came under the second condemnation, and it was thought very unreasonable of him that, holding the views he did, he should wish to be at the Foreign Office. Yet among regrets for the things that might have been, we may find a place for the wish that Morley had once been Foreign Secretary. It would have given him pleasure, and the result would probably have been far different from what was generally expected, for with all his quietist philosophy he was by no means of a disposition to turn the cheek to the smiter. There would have been a classic flavour about his conversations with Ambassadors; he would have left despatches that might have enriched the language, and his "homespun Radicalism," as he liked to call it, would almost certainly not have prevailed against his sense of the greatness and dignity of the office. Whether he would have developed the nerve to carry through a policy by strong action is perhaps more doubtful, and his habit of conceding two-thirds of an opponent's case and expressing a comic despair about his own might have been misunderstood by other Foreign Ministers. It would, nevertheless, have been a very interesting experiment, and since he declared Lord Salisbury to be his model Foreign Secretary, it ought not to have alarmed his political opponents.

C. B. had nicknames for all his colleagues, and, as I have said, he called Morley "Priscilla." The reader must divine for himself exactly what he meant by that, but the two men had different temperaments, which made them rather respect than appreciate each other. Morley puzzled C. B.; he couldn't make out what he was at or what he really wanted, and life seemed too short to find out. Morley thought of C. B. as a "worthy man," and though he heartily admired his staunchness, it seemed to him a queer turn of the wheel which had brought C. B. where he was. C. B. was a man of real intellectual accomplishment, but not in Morley's way, and Morley thought him far simpler than he was. On the one side was a certain spice of amusement at "Priscilla's ways"; on the other, a rather reluctant acknowledgement of qualities which were evidently there, but hard to explain. But Morley had a real tenderness of disposition, which brought his friends closer to him in time of trouble, and the two men, I think, came nearer to each other in the days after Lady C. B.'s death than at any other time in their lives.

CHAPTER XII

THE LIBERAL TRIUMPH

Too Much of a Good Thing—Friendly Advice—A Word about "Honours"—Journalism and Literature—Difficulties of Ministerial Journalism—The Liberal Party and the House of Lords—C. B. as Prime Minister—The Death of His Wife—His Own Illness and Death.

I

THE Election of January, 1906, was from the journalist's point of view altogether too much. For the time being his services were at a discount, and Liberal politicians seemed to be in a position in which they were beyond the good or evil that newspapers could do, or the need of their assistance. The journalist, *qua* journalist, always prefers to have his party in Opposition. Daily support of a Government—the "loyal" support which Governments expect from the newspapers on their side—is a weary business, which cannot be made effective or entertaining to any but devout party worshippers. Our weapons on the *Westminster*—especially the cartoons—were mainly weapons of attack, and it was not easy to convert them at a moment's notice to other uses. There was also a certain personal loss to be faced. Old and intimate friends, contemporaries and juniors, were being caught up into high places where I could not follow them, and where new obligations and loyalties might check free intercourse with the journalist. To see their appointments safely registered was one of the great pleasures of this time, for I had shared their vigils and been more a partisan of some than they were of themselves, but there was inevitably this other side to it.

An old and kind friend came to see me about this time and earnestly advised me to begin to turn my thoughts away from daily journalism. He said that such work as a man in my position could do was done; that such an opportunity as the preceding years had offered to Liberal journalists could not be expected again in my lifetime, and that if I clung on, the future would be disappointment and anticlimax. Now, therefore, was the time to begin looking about for some more stable employment—an official appointment, a partnership in a publishing house or something else which would provide leisure and safety and a pensioned retreat in old age. I suppose every journalist at times dreams of these things, and undoubtedly there were moments when they seemed attractive. The *Westminster*, though not a heavy loss, was still a loss; forbearing and generous as George Newnes was, he could not be expected to go on indefinitely providing money without return. Then there was always the possibility that difficulties would arise in the vast and unwieldy-looking party now returned to power, and that I should do something which would topple me over. My fellow journalists thought me exceptionally fortunate, as indeed I was in very many respects, but judged from the inside my position seldom seemed to be worth more than one year's purchase, and only at very sanguine moments did I venture to believe that I should be where I was in two years' time.

So if a safe retreat had been offered, I dare not say that it would have been refused, but the idea of seeking it was deeply repugnant to me, and before the domestic man had had time to think, the journalist had nearly always snapped "never," when the subject was broached. The thought of sitting in a department, behaving with official propriety, taking orders from superiors, doing one's business like an expert, stirred one to rebellion after twenty years of roaming at large and playing the universal busybody. An instinct tells the whole tribe of journalists that it is really unfit for any other occupation. By this time I had got into the state of mind in which an unwritten leading article was like suppressed measles, and I could get no peace on a holiday this side of the Alps. The idea of retreat never recurred, and my official friends flattered me by saying that I was more useful to them where I was than in any position to which they could promote me.

II

A queer little incident comes back to me from this time. When the first honours list of the new Government appeared, Gould was knighted, to the great satisfaction of all of us at the *Westminster*. But to my surprise I began to receive letters of condolence, many of them from people unknown to me, at the rebuff I was supposed to have received in being passed over for Gould. At an official party which took place a few days later, I was again the recipient of grave expressions of sympathy, and when I helped in getting up a dinner to Gould and made a speech at it, I was actually complimented on the magnanimity I had shown in circumstances assumed to be so mortifying to me. Explanations were impossible at the time, and the thing dogged me for months and was always cropping up in postscripts to letters in which a kindly correspondent "took this occasion" to assure me how much he felt for me in the unmerited neglect of my "claims." Perhaps after the lapse of twenty years there is no harm in saying that soon after the Government was formed, some of my official friends had asked me whether I should like this form of recognition, and that I had begged them to convey to the right quarter that I would rather it were not offered, and should not accept it if it were. My view was (and is) that in the peculiar relations in which he stands to the Government, the working political journalist does better not to put himself in a position in which he seems either to be receiving a reward for past "services" or to be placing himself under an obligation to render future ones. Especially did this seem to me to be the case as between a newspaper editor and a new Government, for the future was uncertain, and one did not wish criticism, if it became necessary, to have the appearance of ingratitude, or approval that of servility.

Gould and I had a talk over it, before he accepted. With his unfailing loyalty he brought his "letter" to me, asked me if I had had a similar communication, and when I replied "no," said at once that he should decline if his acceptance would in any way reflect on me. I told him the circumstances and my view of the matter, as it touched myself, but strongly urged him to accept. I felt as regards Gould that the honour was rightly bestowed. His was exactly the case in which public distinction stamped the real value of a man's work. Thoughtless people treated him as a mere humorist; academic draughtsmen put him outside the circle of "artists." That the serious worth of his contribution to public affairs should be recognized and that he should receive the distinction due to an eminent craftsman seemed to me just to him and altogether salutary.

In a pamphlet published just before his death, Northcliffe made the supposed neglect of my "claims" a subject of reproach to Asquith and founded on it a general indictment of Liberal leaders for their treatment of the Press. Northcliffe was misinformed. It was not Lord Oxford's fault that I remained "unrecognized," it was simply that I held the same view about honours and working journalists in 1916 as I did in 1906. This view was, I think, justified in a practical way during the subsequent years when I was able to keep up a steady protest in the *Westminster* against the abuse of the honours system without being exposed to the retort which must have followed if I too had figured in the lists of this period. When the field was extended to include women, and she was offered a high distinction for her hospital work, my wife unhesitatingly decided that she also would abstain, lest my hand should be weakened in what we both thought to be a necessary protest against the indiscriminate stream of decorations which were descending on the stay-at-homes, while so many were going undecorated to their graves.

This is a personal matter, which I had not intended to include in this record. Yet on reflection I have included it, for I have wished to speak frankly on all questions touching the practice or ethics of journalism, and the question of the degree in which the journalist should receive official rewards is by no means unimportant. There is a good deal of cant talked on this subject, and when one comes to analyse it, superiority to "honours" generally turns out to be superiority to particular kinds of honours which a man thinks unsuitable to his character or below his worth. I have scarcely in all my life known anyone not desire and gratefully receive a

Privy Councillorship, which is distinguished from other titles, only in being written and not spoken. But a serious question arises about the working journalist which I would ask the younger men to bear in mind. In a particular case there may be only the most honourable motives for conferring these rewards, yet the conferring or withholding of them is, in the public eye, the chief means which now remains of influencing the Press; and in the world as it is, the journalist cannot submit himself to it without seeming to come under an influence of which he ought to be independent. If he is suspected of desiring these rewards, he will be thought to be on his good behaviour; if he has taken them, he will be thought to be under an obligation. Looking at all the conditions, and knowing the innumerable subtle influences—many of them most difficult to resist—which prevent the free expression of opinion, I own I should like to see working journalists generally making it a rule that, so long as they are working journalists, they will not accept this particular form of "recognition."

And yet I know this may seem hard measure. Most of the rewards which go with distinction in other professions are denied to the journalist. He may spend a lifetime in the most honourable public service and his name scarcely be heard of outside Fleet Street, or, indeed, outside his newspaper office. He is the "mere journalist"; the universities do not know him, the "real literary" people have only a nodding acquaintance with him. I have been a guest at literary dinners and listened gratefully while popular writers have expressed a hope that I should one day "get out of journalism" and "write a book" which might be worth considering. This attitude is undoubtedly a little galling, and I do think that some of these literary and academic beings might consider a little what "mere journalism" is to those who practise it skilfully and conscientiously, and cease to consider it as an inferior and rather disreputable branch of literature. It is, after all, far easier to write most kinds of books than to keep up a steady and effective flow of journalism for even a few months together. The literary accomplishment of Massingham, to mention only one man who has lately passed from the scene—a man who never wrote a book—was a joy to the craftsman of letters, and I cannot believe that students of literature in future days will fail to note its rare qualities of delicacy and skill. But for the most part, the "mere journalists" must accept the conditions as they find them, and be content with the secret and inward consolations which the most interesting of professions affords.

III

Having digressed so far, let me, before going on, glance at another special difficulty of Ministerial journalism. Many intimate friends of my own were in office from the year 1906 onwards, and nearly all were engaged in schemes of one kind or another which would shortly appear in the form of Bills. They took me into their confidence from the beginning, showed me memoranda and draft Bills, asked me to discuss these with them and to offer criticism and suggestions. This was extraordinarily interesting and rather laborious. I was able to see the machine of Government at work in a great many different departments, but whereas each Minister was concentrated on his own job, I was expected to follow and master all their jobs and to be ready with intelligent and approving comment whenever any of these emerged from the confidential stage. All this in the intervals of editing the paper and writing, as a rule, about 12,000 words a week. These activities made a chronic difficulty on the journalistic side. I could not, like the Olympian editors, delegate them to other people and reserve my own freedom till the public debate began. Very often, whatever sting I had had been extracted long before that stage, and having offered my suggestions and criticisms, I was almost as much a party to the finished product as the Minister in charge of it.

Stead used to warn me very seriously about this at our weekly lunches together. "If you go on like this, you will cease to be an editor and become a departmental hack" was his constant refrain. "Whatever you do, don't let them draw your sting." It was easier said than done. *They* were mostly very honourable and zealous people giving their best to the public service, and if they asked me to help, what could I do but give my best and give it without reserve? How could I take their points and put them away till the journalist got his chance to sting? As between friends I could say, as I often did, that if such a line were eventually taken, I should feel bound to oppose it, but even then, the complaints of a friend are, as Burke said, very different from the invective of an opponent, and journalistically much less effective. So I suppose it proved, for I was often told in these years that the *Westminster* was less lively as a Ministerial than as an Opposition paper. There was a still more awkward problem on the news side. All through these years I knew a great many things that would have had "high news value," but I knew them confidentially and was bound not to let them leak out into the newspaper. Over and over again I had to put my veto on the publication of news which I knew to be true, but which I was under an honourable obligation not to publish. This was the despair of the news side, which often got these things from independent sources, and had to stand by while other newspapers were publishing them and getting the credit for enterprise.

Vexatious as this was to the journalist, I think on balance there was a gain. Though the *Westminster* made fewer news "splashes" than other newspapers, it had the great advantage of being correctly informed. If it could not always publish the truth, it could generally stamp upon what was not true, and its daily comments were founded on a knowledge of the facts which was in the end invaluable. Its readers came to trust it, and other journalists looked to it to check their own sources of knowledge. During these years it was more quoted in Europe and America than almost any other English paper but *The Times*. After all, we had had a fair innings when in Opposition with this kind of news; we had, for example, given the whole list of Ministers when a certain Unionist Government was being formed, while the Ministerial papers had had to wait for the official permit to publish; and if now the tables were turned on us, we had the compensating advantage of close touch with the highest sources of information. So I used to argue with the news staff, but my sympathies were with them when they had to sit silent under the reproach of having been beaten in the race for "scoops."

All this will, of course, seem extremely old-fashioned to the modern school, which thinks of journalism as a branch of commerce. To this school the idea of any journalist putting himself in a position which will embarrass his newspaper in its pursuit of news is necessarily abhorrent. Still more the notion of his taking long and self-important views of what may gradually turn out to be right, when what the great public wants is the news of to-day and in nine cases out of ten will have forgotten all about it, if it turns out to be untrue, next week. I hardly dare confess in the hearing of some of the moderns that the famous interview with the German Kaiser came to me in skeleton form in 1908 and that I sent it back with an expression of incredulity and a strongly expressed opinion that its publication would be mischievous. At the time I kept this secret from my own news-editor, and when I did finally tell him, I could see that he was in despair at my folly. My view was that, whatever might be the effect of this interview, if published in another newspaper, it would be specially bad if published in a newspaper which was known to be a supporter of the Government and was supposed abroad to be in close touch with the Foreign Office and Sir Edward Grey. I think this was justified by the sequel, but journalistically it was without excuse, and if the proprietors of the *Westminster* had been engaged in a branch of commerce, they might very reasonably have reproached me with betraying their interests.

I am sure none of them would have taken this view, and I am very confident that a great many journalists now living would have acted as I did in the same circumstances. I quote it merely as an illustration of the cases of casuistry which constantly presented themselves to journalists in the old tradition, and more especially when their parties were in power. Frequently in these years we had to consider not only whether things were true, but whether their publication at a particular moment would be timely or the reverse, and even more frequently whether it would not be a breach of confidence.

IV

These special difficulties were chronic during the next ten years, but the notion that a Liberal journalist would find his occupation gone when a Liberal Government came to power was utterly exploded before the end of the year 1906. In the then conditions, support of the Government required an unceasing aggressive. The Tory party might be submerged in the House of Commons, but it had an immense majority "in another place," and it still considered itself the predominant political force. Not long after the Election the Conservative leader spoke of the Unionist party "continuing to control the destinies of the country whether in power or in opposition." We jeered at the phrase, but soon discovered that it had a very serious meaning. Before the end of the first session, the Lords under Balfour's leadership had destroyed the Education Bill and the Plural Voting Bill and severely mauled the Agricultural Holdings Bill and sundry other Bills. Practically nothing remained of the work of the first session except the South African Settlement, which, at one time, seemed in danger, but was eventually let pass after heated protests.

Liberals were dumbfounded. They had taken for granted that the immense Liberal majority would be worth something in domestic legislation. It had never occurred to them that the Tory party would in the very first session use the House of Lords to destroy both the Education Bill and the Plural Voting Bill; and the method employed in the first of these measures of turning it inside out and sending it back to its parents as an unrecognizable changeling caused intense exasperation. I saw the Archbishop of Canterbury occasionally during this year, and I do not think that this method of conducting Church defence was altogether to his liking, but the Tory politicians were unappeasable and they were evidently determined to destroy the Government and send it back to the country as soon as possible.

In any case, it was clear after a few weeks that there was to be no humdrum life for either Liberal minister or Liberal journalist. A Liberal Government could not sit down quietly and enjoy what are called the sweets of office. It would have to fight every inch of the ground as keenly in power as in opposition, and sooner or later there would be a fight to the death between Lords and Commons. I remember well the long and anxious consultation as to whether the challenge should be accepted on the Education Bill and another Election held in January, 1907. Liberal M.P.s who had imagined that they were safe for at least four years thought that a very doleful prospect, and the Whips were of opinion that education was not quite the flaming cause in the country at large that it was in Nonconformist circles. It was decided to go on and "fill up the cup," but from that moment till the Parliament Act was carried the shadow of the Lords lay over everything, and nothing could be proposed without the most careful thought as to whether it could be carried in the teeth of the Lords, and if not, whether it would be good ammunition in the battle against the Lords. These were far from ideal conditions for legislation; and it is perhaps more surprising that so many good and useful things were done than that there was a great deal of heat and bitterness and some sound and fury signifying nothing.

C. B. rose far above his previous reputation in these years, and the South African settlement—for which they are chiefly remembered—was in a very real sense his own personal achievement. But apart from this, the Election seemed to make a new man of him, and he acquired an ascendancy over the House of Commons which was, in its way, unique. He did not, of course, inspire the same awe as Gladstone, and he did not fascinate or dazzle as "Dizzy" or Balfour. But he seemed at that moment to be the supreme representative man and the appointed antithesis to the tacticians and dialecticians who had plagued both parties in the previous years. Just as Gladstone got merit out of contrast with Disraeli, so C. B. got it out of contrast with Balfour, and was thought above all things to be the plain man against the mystifier. The thing was a little overdone, for though he was a very direct and straightforward politician, he was by no means the kind of plain man that some people thought him. Much as he disliked to hear himself called "canny," he really deserved the epithet, and was as skilful in the minor arts which disarm and conciliate as any man of his time. He had also, as Lord Grey has said, a sense of other people's infirmities which rather blinded him to their positive qualities and was a barrier to all impulsive friendships. His colleagues used sometimes to say that C. B. had only one friend, and that was his wife.

Certainly he had as conspicuous and personal a triumph as any politician in our time, but there was a heavy other side to the account. For the first six months that he was Prime Minister his wife was dying, and for the remainder of the period he was dying. His Marienbad physician, Dr. Ott, had been quite right when he said that office in the conditions in which he took it would be a very grave risk. But to the burden of office was added that of his wife's illness and death, and even his intimates were not permitted to share that. Just before the end, when he had at last been persuaded to go to his bed and leave the patient for a few hours to doctor and nurse, he said in the morning, "How strange to have spent a whole night in bed." She had a rooted repugnance to professional nurses, and for six months he had spent the night on a couch in her sick-room, getting up at all hours to give her food and medicine, which very often she would take from no one else.

All this time he had the unceasing work of Parliament, Cabinet and the unending correspondence and interviewing that fell to the Prime Minister. So far as I know he kept his private trouble absolutely to himself, and except that his secretaries occasionally found him dozing over his letters in the morning, he let no hint go out of what he was suffering and enduring. Deeply as he felt her death, I think there was a certain rebound after it; looking into his diary, I found that he went more into society in the subsequent six months than at almost any time in the previous ten years. There were ill-natured people who commented on this and drew the inference that he had not really been so attached to his wife as had been supposed. The truth was that he was lost without her, and in a perfectly natural way sought the companionship of others as a refuge from loneliness. It probably never occurred to him that any other construction could be put upon it, but if it had occurred to him he would not have cared.

He had the first of the heart attacks which finally proved fatal soon after his wife's death, and then a respite for a year. The session of 1907 was another exhausting wrangle with the Lords, and it was evident that he was flagging when the House rose. But what finally broke him was the portentous programme of speeches and ceremonial occasions that he had arranged for the autumn and winter. On November 9th he was at the Guildhall making the Prime Minister's annual speech; on the 11th he went to Windsor to meet the German Emperor; on the 12th he came up from Windsor for a Cabinet and returned to it for a State Banquet; after the Banquet he returned to London, spent two hours in correspondence in the morning, got into uniform and was at the Guildhall again at 11.30 for the civic luncheon to the German Emperor. There he had to remain standing for an hour before the Emperor appeared. (Ceremonialists sometimes forget what suffering they inflict on ill and ageing men.) Luncheon (and speech) over, he had to rush to Paddington to catch a train to take him to Bristol in time for the Colston Banquet, somehow getting out of uniform en route, and there he delivered an hour's speech on the fiscal question and the House of Lords. Shortly after midnight he had a heart seizure from which he barely escaped with his life, and from this moment he was a doomed man.

I have sometimes wondered whether as he lay dying and looked back on the past he judged it to have been worth while to have had these two years at this cost. My own impression is that in spite of it all, he would have said "Certainly." The moralist might hang on to it an impressive moral about seeming triumph and actual tragedy, the hollowness of success and so forth, but C. B. himself would have hated to be painted as a hero of tragedy, and what, I am sure, he would have liked his friends to say was that his was just a common human case in which he took what came and conducted himself decently and bravely. In the first ten months of his Prime Ministership I saw him seldom and only for a very short time, but in the last months I met him frequently and had long talks with him before his final illness. In one of these he was undoubtedly very depressed, but on the other occasions he seemed to be in the best of spirits, and brimmed over with genial and pleasantly cynical talk. Just as he could never believe that his wife's illness could ever be fatal, he never thought of himself as a dying man until he actually took to his bed in his final illness. My last memory of him is standing very upright in the hall of the Reform Club and assuring me that he was "no end better" and greatly looking forward to the grand tussle of the coming session. Three days later he was on his death-bed.

CHAPTER XIII

THE MEN OF 1906

Lord Morley at the India Office—A Warning Despatch—The Morley Touch—Admiration of Curzon—Resignation and Return—The Handy Man of the Government—Asquith's Qualities—His Attitude to Journalists—A Tennyson Incident—Sufficient unto the Day—Asquith's Methods in Office—Lloyd George—A Railway Committee—Lloyd George's Accomplishments—His Dual Personality—The War and After—Relations with Intellectuals—Crewe—Churchill—McKenna—Arthur Markham.

I HAVE necessarily written much at various times about the men who from 1906 onwards bore the chief burden of public affairs, but there remain certain impressions gathered from personal contact with some of them which may conveniently be set down here. In this chapter chronology must go loose and some things be anticipated which are out of the order of this story.

I

SOON after he became Secretary of State for India, Morley asked me to go and see him at his office, and I found him installed in the famous round chamber overlooking the Park. I remember remarking that there was not an eastward looking window in the room, to which he replied rather mysteriously that that was an allegory. He plunged at once into Indian affairs and gave me a lively sketch of the ringing controversy between Viceroy and Commander-in-Chief which he had inherited from his predecessor. He told me that he had already his own ideas as to how to settle it, but that, as a preliminary, he was about to send a despatch to all the parties to intimate that if any one of them tendered his resignation, it would be instantly accepted. Whatever came, he was not going to start dealing with them with threats of resignation hanging over his head.

It sounded wise and shrewd, but I could not help thinking of it with an inward smile in after years, for there was no more inveterate resigner than Morley himself. In his own "Recollections" he speaks of having "banished myself to the Brahmaputra," and well I remember that phrase. That he would not remain long on the Brahmaputra, that there was a certain compact by which he was to obtain release, and that we must look out for a "vacant stool" in the Cabinet were mysterious intimations constantly renewed after the first few weeks. C. B. was at first a good deal troubled by them and, while denying that there was any compact, wrote charming letters of persuasion and appeasement; but after a year he took it as all in the day's work, and accepted it with the usual twinkle. I got the impression that Morley did really think himself "banished," but that, being where he was, he found the exile thoroughly congenial save at occasional moments of depression. I cannot pretend to bring an expert judgment to bear, but I should say that he was a first-class Secretary of State. Unlike most literary men, he was both methodical and industrious; whether at home or in the office, you could seldom ask him for a paper or a reference without his instantly being able to find it, and he brought the same conscientious care to the small things as to the great. I used often to go home from my visits to the India Office with bundles of papers and memoranda given me for "evening meditation," and sometimes I was invited to make comments or suggestions, which very hesitatingly I did. It was impossible not to be struck with the thoroughness with which he laid out the ground, the patience with which he sorted the inordinate quantities of raw material handed out to him, his carefulness to inform himself about facts, the fine spacious, historic background against which he set and saw the daily problem. The Morley touch was in everything that he wrote or minuted, and a fine and sensitive touch it was. But he was undoubtedly autocratic in his ways and thoughts, and liked you to understand that he knew how to keep Viceroy and Council in their respective places.

He put up a good fight for Liberal ideas, and his Reform Scheme went as far as could reasonably be expected at the moment, but the Little-Englander and the doctrinaire were left behind when he entered the India Office. He seemed to pass at once into the tradition of the place and to feel its splendours. He even seemed to take special pleasure in the details of military operations and was, I heard, an excellent chairman of the Committee of Imperial Defence, when subjects touching India were before it. On one occasion when he offered his advice on the conduct of a frontier expedition—"sharp sallies and quick return to the base"—Gould dressed him up as a Field-Marshal, and I had a special print made of the drawing and sent it to Wimbledon. He was, or professed to be, delighted, though Lady Morley, I gathered, was not quite so pleased. His ideal Viceroy seemed to be Curzon, for whom, as an Indian administrator, he always expressed unbounded admiration. He wished Curzon to have his peerage in the year 1906, but on that point C. B. was not to be persuaded.

I have a very strong impression that he by no means desired to leave the India Office in 1910. One Saturday in November I received an urgent summons from him to come to Wimbledon that afternoon and to bring my wife, for whom he had always the friendliest regard. We found him greatly perturbed. "It is all over," he said; "I'm gone from the Brahmaputra and out of the Government." He explained that he had resigned and that Asquith had accepted his resignation. I asked whether he had really intended to go out of the Government as well as out of the India Office, and very quickly formed the impression that he had intended neither the one nor the other. Women could always speak more frankly to him than men, and my wife, divining what had happened, broke in and scolded him roundly for wishing to give up at a moment when so much was in the balance, and above all, the Irish question, to which he had devoted his life. This was not at all displeasing to him, indeed, I think it was what he wanted and expected, but he said that it was now irretrievable and that there was nothing more to be said or done. I said by no means, and that even if he had closed the door on himself at the India Office I was quite sure another door would be opened to him if he chose to remain in the Government. To this he replied that nothing would induce him to be a "suppliant" for readmission, or to authorize anyone else to put in supplications on his behalf. I said that all talk about supplication was nonsense, and that it was merely a question of letting the Prime Minister know what his wishes were. In fine, would he, if the Prime Minister asked him, remain in the Government even though it should turn out that the India Office had been filled up?

To that after some demur he said yes. Then it crossed my mind that not only might the India Office be filled up, but that the consequent change or changes on the appointment of his successor to the India Office might also have been made so that all doors might be, in fact, closed. This was Saturday afternoon, and Morley told me he was to see Asquith on Monday at 12 and then, if nothing more was said to him, he would just make his bow and depart. I seemed to myself to have been extraordinarily rash. Asquith would almost certainly be out of town, and it was quite probable that he would not return until just in time for his appointment with Morley. In the meantime he might easily have committed himself to other people. We left hastily and I raced to Downing Street, only to discover that the Prime Minister had gone to Scotland and was not expected till the Sunday night train, which would bring him back any time between 8 and 11 on Monday.

I spent a very uneasy Sunday, but somehow I succeeded in catching Asquith just half an hour before Morley was due on Monday morning. Crewe, who had been appointed Indian Secretary, was with him in the Cabinet Room, and Asquith said at once that that door was closed. But the other doors were fortunately open, and half an hour later Morley walked back as President of the Council. It was as I surmised. Asquith said that he had a drawer full of Morley's resignations, and that he really supposed that this one was meant to be final. Another member of the Government told me later that the number of Morley's resignations between 1905 and 1910 was computed to be twenty-three. It is really a high tribute to him that he survived so many of these occasions. Everybody loved him and thought him worth all the trouble it took to keep him. Asquith was firm only on one point—viz. that Crewe, who was modest and helpful enough to make any sacrifice on a difficult occasion, should be Secretary for India, but it was only necessary to say that Morley wished to remain for Asquith to find a way.

From this time till 1914 Morley was the supreme handy man of the Government. Early in 1911 Crewe fell ill and for six months Morley was back at the India Office doing his old duties without any sign of the weariness that he professed to feel in the previous year, and on top of that he took charge of the Parliament Bill in the House of Lords. Well I remember the evening when he read out the Royal intimation that the creation of peers was really intended. I went into the House of Lords lobby after the division, and as he came out of the House he took my arm and walked me along with him through the cheering crowds in the Central Lobby and St. Stephen's Porch into Parliament Square. He was very much moved and vastly relieved, for he had greatly disliked the idea of creating peers, and in some of his moods had gone so far as to say that if it really came to that it would have to be done by some Government of which he was not a member.

In addition to these labours he sat frequently in Committee of Imperial Defence, played his old part as negotiator with the Irish on the Home Rule Bill, and finally, when Grey was on holiday, took over his work and acted for short periods as Foreign Secretary. This, I think, he liked better than anything else, and if he made any unpleasing discoveries or found anything to disapprove of in the ruling policy, his friends were not aware of it at the time. In those days he seemed always to be on the best terms with Grey. On the whole I should say that there was no part of his public life that he enjoyed more than the years between 1910 and 1914.

I have memories of many lunches with him at this time, either at his corner table at the Carlton Restaurant or at the Senior United Services Club, which was his particular choice in clubs from the day that he was elected to it as Secretary of State. And sometimes he dined with us in Sloane Street and Rosebery came too. Those were delightful occasions, and there was no better talk in the world than when he and Rosebery came together. Grey was the best third to these two, and, if sport was desired, it was quite a good plan to add Winston Churchill and get the others to "draw" and admonish him.

II

Asquith had a rather different quality. Morley talked politics first and last, Rosebery first and not last, Asquith only when he was asked. If one wanted a political talk with Asquith, it was always wise to get an appointment and bring it within the time-table of the working day. Then he gave unstintingly. I have golden memories of the hours spent in his company and his wife's—at "The Wharf," in Cavendish Square and in Bedford Square—but not many of them are marked in my mind as political hours. Very often I have had more political talk with her than with him, and rare good talk hers is—penetrating as well as brilliant, and, in spite of a pleasant malice, altogether warm-hearted and human. Asquith through life has kept the professional man's habit—rare among politicians—of turning for refreshment to other things when the day's work is over, and he has an admirable gift for both small talk and serious and incisive talk about life and books and people. In spite of his statesmanlike façade, he is entirely without pompousness or self-importance. Gravity he has always on serious occasions. There could be no greater outrage than to suggest that he talked in a vulgar or trivial strain with any friend or colleague about the war. It might, at least, be remembered by those who permit these things to go into print that, in addition to his burden as Prime Minister, he had the great grief of losing his eldest son and lived in constant anxiety about the two younger.

Fleet Street supposed at one time that he deliberately kept journalists at bay, and accordingly marked him down as one of the public men who were hostile to the Press. For this he suffered not a little at some critical moments, and journalists were apt to misunderstand what was an entirely honourable feeling on his part. He did not despise the Press, but he did despise the flatterers and wooers of the Press, and the newspapers that ministered to them. He was of the old school that believed in the independence of both politicians and journalists; and though he has had many friends among journalists, he has never sought to influence them; and still less would he stir a finger to appease journalistic enemies, or even to correct flagrant misrepresentations. Possibly in the end he drove this too far, and I fancy there was a considerable element of wounded feelings in Northcliffe's attacks on him. Northcliffe in his curious way had a real respect for Asquith, and precisely for the reason that he had not wooed the newspapers. But when he became proprietor of *The Times*, Northcliffe thought that a new chapter should have been opened and confidential relations established between himself and the Prime Minister. But by this time Northcliffe had come to represent everything in the Press that Asquith detested and, in spite of the efforts of various intermediaries, he was adamant.

I saw Asquith often in the House in early days and heard some of his speeches in the 1886 and 1892 Parliaments, but it was not till 1894 that I first spoke to him, on the introduction (if I remember rightly) of Arthur Acland. He had long been famous to me as *the* Balliol man in Parliament, and the legend of his exploits past and to come had filled the College when I was an undergraduate. None of us had the slightest doubt that he was to be Prime Minister. As a young man I had the kind of awe of him which is felt by the undistinguished junior for the College hero, and I have never quite lost it, or felt it in the same degree for anyone else. To be intimate with such a being was beyond presumption; to think of him as an ordinary politician impossible. It was a welcome surprise to find him friendly and simple and apparently quite unaware of the pedestal on which he stood. All through his middle life he seemed just the hard-working professional man doing Parliament, as Trollope wrote novels, in the time over from his ordinary occupations. I met him occasionally coming away from the Temple just as I was leaving my office in Tudor Street hard by, and we walked together down the Strand or along the Embankment towards Westminster. But he seemed to stand outside the groups of striving politicians who were talking about Liberal programmes, or the future of the Party; and I never went to him as the journalist seeking information, and he never seemed to regard me as the journalist.

The South African War threw the Liberal party into confusion, and from time to time I said rather sharp things about him and his friends in the *Westminster*. I can remember only one occasion on which he pulled me up in the three years between 1899 and 1902, and that was not for my own enormities, but for an article by another hand which I had printed in the W. G. In those days he seemed to me rather stubborn and, from the journalist's point of view, vexatiously indifferent to the pin-pricks which brought cries of pain from the normal politician. It was very much in my mind, though scarcely at all, I think, in his, that the predestined Prime Minister was imperilling our designs for him in his attachment to the ineffectual Liberal League, and to this day I remember the pleasure with which I learnt in March, 1902, that he had taken the Liberal Imperialist situation in hand and was determined that there should not be a split. C. B., who never minded open opposition, trusted Asquith as he trusted no one else in that camp, and at that moment no one else but Asquith could have got back on to terms with him or healed the schism between the two tabernacles.

Politically speaking, I saw him far less frequently and intimately at this time than either Rosebery or Haldane, and had none of the lively exchanges and collisions of opinion with him that gave spice and variety to friendship with Haldane. But other things equally agreeable linger in my memory. On a delightful summer day in May, 1900, a party of us sat on the lawn at Mells where we were guests of Sir John and Lady Horner. Besides our hosts and their two daughters, Mr. and Mrs. Asquith, my wife and I, Sir Herbert and Lady Jekyll and their two daughters, Pamela and Barbara, were there, and we sat in the shade of a great yew. Looking closely at the yew I saw the little yellow-green tufts with which it flowers creeping along its boughs, and was moved to quote :—

> To thee too comes the golden hour,
> When flower is feeling after flower.

To my surprise Asquith said, "What's that? Say it again." I said it again and replied that it was Tennyson, "In Memoriam." He said that whatever it might be, it wasn't "In Memoriam," and he didn't think it was Tennyson. I persisted and asked if he thought I had invented it or was capable of inventing it. He said I was capable of anything, but he didn't think it was Tennyson, and it was certainly not "In Memoriam." Hearing the argument, two of the girls had slipped away and presently came back bringing a Tennyson with them, and sure enough my lines were discovered in section XXXIX of "In Memoriam." My victory was not popular, but at least I thought it was complete. Not at all. In spite of this ocular demonstration, Asquith held to it quite firmly that the passage was not in the authentic "In Memoriam" as he knew it, and now I began to feel as if I had connived with printer and publisher in a late and spurious interpolation. That guilt was not on my head or theirs, but Asquith was perfectly right. The two lines were *not* in his edition. Three or four days later, when we had returned to London, he wrote to me :—

> 20 Cavendish Square,
> June 1, 1900.
>
> My Dear Spender,—If you will look at any edition of "In Memoriam" prior to 1870 or thereabouts (mine, e.g., is the 19th edition, dated 1867) you will not find in it the poem now numbered XXXIX ("Old Warder of these buried bones"), in which the disputed lines occur. It must have been inserted between 1867 and 1870, with the result that, instead of there being as before CXXX poems, there are since the alteration CXXXI.
>
> I regretfully admit that the evidence compels me to withdraw the attribution to you of "flower feeling after flower." But I was right in maintaining that, if it came from the pen of the real Tennyson, it was an afterthought, and no part of the original "In Memoriam."
>
> The "Life" throws no light upon the matter.—Yours sincerely,
> H. H. Asquith.

Honours, therefore, were easy, and I was left admiring the extraordinary accuracy of memory which had enabled him to assert thus positively that a certain two lines were *not* in the poem as he knew it, and to maintain the denial in the face of apparently conclusive evidence to the contrary.*

I cherish this little incident, and often in later years it came back to me as exactly typical of the man. He has this perfect knowledge of what he knows; and if he asserts a thing, you will surely be confounded if you dispute with him. Equally, you may be sure that he will not assert a thing unless he is sure about it. On the other hand, he has a certain reluctance to admit the new fact, unless the evidence is overwhelming, and that, I imagine, has been extremely irritating to the nimbler minds which leap at new facts and take every liberty with old ones. There is a Latin word *ultro* which exactly denotes this quality of jumping forward, and I know of no English equivalent to it. If one said that Asquith did not do things *ultro* and that Lloyd George did, one would be much nearer the truth than if one said that the one was lethargic and the other energetic.

When C. B. died and Asquith succeeded in April, 1908, there were serious misgivings. It had been supposed that C. B. alone held the secret of keeping the vast, unwieldy party with its many shades of opinion, in a state of unity, and many of the wise men predicted a rapid decay. Even before C. B.'s departure, the pendulum had begun to swing back, and Asquith was thought to be the last man to check it or give it the reverse impulse. The Tories gave him a year, and not many Liberals gave him more than two years. One must not under-rate what Conservative blundering or Lloyd Georgian energy contributed to the sequel, but neither would have availed without Asquith's steadfastness, his faculty of concentrating on the day's work, his mild but firm discipline of the stunters, raiders and zealots who are always breaking bounds in a Radical party. He got little credit for his part, because he was always careful not to let his hand appear. After five years of his Prime Ministership, it was still in doubt whether he was a partisan of right wing or left, and he had done such even justice that he had no party in his own Cabinet to proclaim his merits or to defend him against his critics. I do not mean that he had not many warm friends who greatly admired and respected him—everybody respected him—but he had no body of personal partisans pledged to fight his battles against all comers. Not to have this kind of personal following was the secret of his success in these years, and had he had it, his Cabinet would have been broken by the collision of two groups long before 1914. But when the end came, there were no Asquithians to champion his cause, as there would have been Gladstonians in like case.

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* I referred the point to my father, who was a very accurate and careful Tennyson scholar, and he told me that Tennyson, who greatly prided himself on the accuracy of his knowledge of natural fact, had been much nettled by certain criticisms of Section II ("Old yew which graspest at the stones") in which he appeared to imply that the yew never flowers :—

> The seasons bring the flowers again,
>   And bring the firstling to the flock;
>   And in the dusk of thee, the clock
> Beats out the little lives of men.
>
> O not for thee the glow, the bloom,
>   Who changest not in any gale,
>   Nor branding summer sun avail
> To touch thy thousand years of gloom.

And so, to put himself right, he wrote the new section now numbered XXXIX. Andrew Bradley partly confirms this in his Commentary, but takes the two sections as representing different moods of the poet. By the way, the "Life" does throw some light on the matter, for it dates the new section as having been written in April, 1868 almost exactly as Asquith surmised.

Well I remember seeing him at work behind the scenes on some critical occasions in these years, the battles about naval programmes, the miners' strikes, the railway strike and certain of the foreign crises. When other people were agitated, he was always cool and quiet; if he was sceptical to the optimists, he was never depressed by the pessimists. He listened to everybody, pricked all the bubbles by questions which went to the root of the matter, and said he "would consider." To the zealots with panaceas or the partisans who wanted to defeat other partisans it was often exasperating, and already they whispered "Wait and see." But his decision, when it came, was in the nick of time, and it was nearly always just and sober. And generally it was a healing decision, which kept the sections together, even when one or other of them had to be over-ruled. In all this there was a certain quality of patient benevolence which I have never seen in any other public man. Undoubtedly Asquith disliked doing disagreeable things, and this at times was a weakness, but he generally did them when it was necessary, and the disagreeable things at each other's expense which his critics demanded were very often not at all necessary.

III

Lloyd George was so much the opposite of all this that, looking backwards, the clash between him and Asquith seems to have been inevitable from the beginning. I saw little of Lloyd George personally in his early years and my first serious talk with him was in September, 1902, or thereabouts, when he came with my brother Harold to Etretat in Normandy, where we and the McKennas were then staying. I cannot remember exactly what we talked about, but I remember the impression that he was much less of a wild man than he was supposed to be, that he measured forces and personalities in politics with a cool eye, and had a craftsman's appreciation of good work, whether done by a friend or an opponent; also charm, friendliness, vivacity and a rather deceptive appearance of simplicity. I gathered that he thought me an academic, but then, as later, I was struck by his graces and accomplishments, and the first-rate quality of his talk. It was impossible to doubt that he was a man to be reckoned with.

In 1907 he asked me to join a Departmental Committee of the Board of Trade on the question of the railways, which, apparently, he intended to be the principal subject of his activities as President. He, himself, presided and with the exception of myself, who was a sort of *amicus curiae*, all the members of this Committee were either railway managers, representative traders and men of business, or officials. He was a first-class chairman, and nothing could have been more skilful than his handling of these diverse elements. He always got up his subject beforehand, and though he knew exactly what he was driving at, he generally kept his intention veiled until opponents had been drawn three-quarters of the way he wanted them to go, then he cut off their retreat. He had an almost uncanny way of persuading men in opposite camps that they really meant the same thing—which was the thing he wanted them to mean—and before a few weeks were over, the supposed irreconcilable differences of railways and traders were dissolving into an incredible unity. For several months

I spent all my spare time on this job, and got an inside view of the railway and trading world which was extremely useful to me as a journalist, and of fascinating interest. What, if anything, I gave in return I cannot precisely remember, but I brought away a new and interesting impression of Lloyd George which long remained with me. Less than ever did he seem a wild man or zealot of impracticable ideas. I saw him as a man of business, conciliator, moderator, with a touch which made my own modest efforts at smoothing seem crude. Indeed, in these respects he was almost too good to be true. On the other hand I got a strong impression that it was extremely imprudent to begin going anywhere with him unless you were prepared to go the whole way; otherwise you would assuredly find your retreat cut off.

If this Committee had continued its work and Lloyd George had remained President of the Board of Trade, a large part of the reconstruction and amalgamation scheme which followed the war would probably have been anticipated by ten years and much else in railway law and practice that still remains a vexation have been cleared up. But C. B. died and in the changes that followed Lloyd George went to the Exchequer and Winston Churchill succeeded him at the Board of Trade. Churchill seemed to care nothing about these railway problems and the Committee was not his child. He sat dutifully in the chair, but he found the subject tedious and complicated, and rapidly wound us up with a perfunctory report which bore no relations to our labours or what most of us intended to be the result.

The Lloyd George of the Railway Committee was the Coalition Lloyd George in embryo, and as time went on, one always had to remember that this adroit smoother and negotiator was living in the same tenement of flesh with the Limehouse orator and robber of hen-roosts. They were at times uneasily yoked, and the alternation of the two figures was always a puzzle to those who saw both. As I remember these times, I was in and out of favour at comparatively short intervals. The eight Dreadnoughts of 1909 got me into a sad scrape with both him and Churchill, for I was a staunch upholder of McKenna's programme, and they thought it a reckless extravagance. Between Fisher, McKenna and other

Ministers I was undoubtedly rather busy at this time, and I brought on myself a sharp reminder that I could not obtain the journalist's privilege if I strayed outside my province and trespassed on the Ministerial preserves. Again, though I gave the Budget of 1909 an energetic general support in the *Westminster*, I objected to certain minor provisions which seemed trivial and provocative, and this made further friction. So if I went to 11 Downing Street, in 1909, it was mostly to be scolded and to go away impenitent. But Lloyd George bore no malice, and for the next five years my memories of him are friendly and agreeable. I saw him often and found him full of ideas with which I cordially sympathized. I was a little anxious when the Coalition Lloyd George appeared prematurely at the abortive Conference between parties on the Lords and Irish questions, not because these subjects were unsuitable for that kind of settlement, but because he seemed rather dangerously to under-rate the obstacles which had to be surmounted. I was afraid either of a "complete agreement" signifying nothing or a deal sacrificing Free Trade—a subject on which he always kept us in a certain state of anxiety.

In 1912 he asked me to join the Committee which was preparing the programme for the intended Land Campaign. This was composed almost entirely of Cabinet Ministers, and my title to be present came from my association with Arthur Acland, who had done an immense amount of spade-work on the subject in the previous year. When he was laid aside by illness he handed his material to me and I put it into shape and prepared from it the introduction to the famous "Land Book." Again I saw Lloyd George at his best, wise and practical, facing difficulties, anticipating objections, drawing on his own experience, the very opposite of the urban sciolist that his opponents represented him to be. Vividly I remember our final meeting—over the dinner table at Haldane's house in Queen Anne's Gate—when we presented our main conclusions to the Prime Minister and got them passed, after much shrewd questioning, just in the nick of time to enable him to catch a night train to Scotland.

Though I was heartily in sympathy with Lloyd George as Minister of Munitions—which I still think to have been his great contribution to the war—I had many intimations that I was in his black books on other questions. The *Westminster* was an unsparing critic of many of his proceedings during the last years of the war and of some of his proceedings during the Peace Conference. I naturally did not welcome the organized destruction of the Liberal party at the election of 1918, and still less the proceedings of the Coalition Government in Ireland. In these years the alternations between the two kinds of Lloyd George were altogether too bewildering for less nimble minds to keep pace with. But as between journalist and politician, he still had one great merit. He always let you know where you were with him. He has told me several times in my life that if I attacked him as Minister or leader, he would consider it perfectly legitimate to retaliate on me as a journalist. He will have none of the make-believe which leaves the journalist to attack in a mask and assumes him to be outside the arena. This is fair enough, and I agree that the journalist has no more right to complain than any other controversialist when an opponent hits back.

In the early days, as later, Lloyd George had a peculiar fascination for academic and intellectual men. They admired in him all the qualities which they were conscious of not possessing themselves, and they looked to him to supply the touch of devilry which the populace is supposed to expect in a political party. Their mistake was to suppose that they could keep him within the bounds convenient to themselves. There could have been no greater illusion. He was a romantic opportunist, full of ambition and ready for any sort of adventures in or out of bounds and on the one side or the other. They were pedestrians following what they thought to be the path of logic and fidelity to principle. The two temperaments were bound to clash, and the methods of each were unintelligible to the other. But a clash with Lloyd George meant always that someone saw red and damned the consequences. The House of Lords saw red in 1909; Baldwin saw red in 1923; Lord Oxford saw red in 1926. I have heard elaborate stories of how Lord Oxford was driven reluctantly into the breach by friends and colleagues, who primed him with their own hostility to Lloyd George. There was no truth in any of them. Lord Oxford acted entirely on his own initiative.

He had reached a moment when he simply could not go on, and if the Party chose not to support him, that was their business.

IV

There was no more useful Cabinet Minister during the whole period from 1906 to 1916 than Crewe. If one had to name half a dozen men who had exerted an influence in these times out of all proportion to the publicity they gained, Crewe would certainly be among them. He inherited from his father a refined literary gift, and now and again he writes poetry of beautiful quality. But he was not a public performer, and though his speeches were always neatly phrased and admirably to the point, they were more suited to the House of Lords than to a popular audience. His strength lay in his good judgment and quiet persuasiveness. If one had asked almost any group of Cabinet Ministers during these years to which of their colleagues they would rather have taken a difficult point for a dispassionate judgment, the answer would almost certainly have been Crewe. He was judged to be always a "good Liberal," but he stood apart from wings and sections, and could neither be scared nor bemused by Lloyd George. He was a shrewd judge of character and had no axe of his own to grind. "Culture" is supposed to be a black mark against politicians, but all the same it wins respect, and Crewe's knowledge of literature and history and his all-round acquaintance with European affairs raised him above ordinary politicians and gave him prestige with his colleagues. Above all he was one of the men who, in Mr. Gladstone's phrase, were ready to "put their minds into the common stock." My talks with Crewe during these years remain in memory as among the most agreeable and most useful that I had with any public man. Happily he is still in a position which gives him admirable scope for his great gifts in the public service.

There was certainly a remarkable range of literary talent in C. B.'s and Asquith's Governments. Governments which included Morley, Bryce, Birrell, Crewe, Fitzmaurice, Haldane, Winston Churchill and Charles Masterman had no excuse for failure, if historians, philosophers, essayists and lively writers could, with their combined wisdom, have ensured success. The way was not easy for some of them. Birrell had sad trouble in his first year at the Education Office, and I still recall his despair at the orgies of unreason among the pugnacious partisans of Church and Chapel which brought his Education Bill to nought. All his good humour and humanity beat vainly on these rocks. It was a queer turn of the wheel which sent him to Ireland after Bryce had departed to Washington—as if the Liberal party, having tried Morley and Bryce (and the Conservative party George Wyndham), had, at last, discovered the right kind of literary man to suit the Celtic temperament. It was seriously argued in those days that the lighter and more discursive style, rather than the austerities of the other two, were what the Irish wanted. Birrell, I am afraid, found the Sinn Feiners even more intractable in 1916 than he had found the Bishops and Archbishops in 1906.

McKenna and Winston Churchill came up side by side during the Cabinet-making of 1906. C. B. put aside the Financial Secretaryship of the Treasury and the Colonial Under-Secretaryship for them to choose between, and Churchill unhesitatingly chose the latter. He shrewdly foresaw that this place, though ordinarily unimportant, would (since Elgin the Colonial Secretary was in the Lords) give him the first-class opportunity in the very first session of presenting to the Commons and defending through all its stages the forthcoming South African settlement. In this he was well justified, and before the year was out it was evident that he was going far.

Churchill no doubt has forgotten, but I vividly remember my first meeting with him. It was at Northcliffe's (then Alfred Harmsworth's) house in Berkeley Square, about the year 1900, and he was then little more than a boy. He was the very image of bubbling, self-confident, ambitious youth, and I was greatly attracted by him. He put to me a conundrum. He was making speeches all over the country, excellent speeches, eloquent speeches, full of good stuff, most useful party stuff. Yet not a word of them was ever reported in the London newspapers. How was he to get reported?

Entering into the spirit of the thing, I replied that it was very simple. Let him, the next time he spoke, make the most outrageous attack he could think of upon one of his own leaders, write it down on a sheet of notepaper and hand it to the reporters, and he would find it the next day in almost every London paper and probably with the headline, "Lord Randolph's son imitates his father." To this day I remember his puzzled look—not quite sure how far I was quizzing him—but he politely said that he would consider it.

Churchill is endowed by nature with the most rhetorical mind that I have known in any public man. Other men have been as good or better rhetoricians with their tongues, but none of them thought or lived rhetoric as he did. To discuss a question with Churchill was to see him dramatize it in successive scenes with effective lights and colours, and then at the end choose the scene which was best dramatized and most effectively lit. It was fascinating to watch him at work painting the scenery and building up the wings, but at times one had an uneasy feeling that truth and practicability and even common sense were left behind in this breathless chase after the picturesque. Nothing seemed to appeal to him unless it could be presented in this form, and he appeared to be capable of leaping from one side of an argument to its opposite without the slightest sense of incongruity, if the opposite lent itself to a more effective plastic treatment.

I have heard Churchill called unprincipled by people who were angry with him, but that is to do him an injustice. His mind did honestly work in this way, and his real inclination was to conclude that a thing was right and true if it could be stated in a rhetorically effective manner. When he left the Tory party in 1904, he saw Free Trade in this way, and gave amazingly vivid expression to the democratic part of the doctrine; when he rejoined the Tory party, he saw the "red peril" in the same way. It was his fervid vision of a conquering army entering Constantinople, restoring the sea-road to Russia, and smashing the eastern flank of the Central Powers, that made him hot for the Dardanelles expedition and caused him to overlook the formidable obstacles to that enterprise. Years may have changed him, but at the time when I knew him best and when he was making his reputation, no man seemed to live in such a perpetual state of mental excitement or to be able to entertain so many vivid and jostling ideas at the same time, or to be so honest and brilliant about them all.

Antecedently one would have said that such a man would have a brief and meteoric career and be wrecked finally by his own instability. In fact, Churchill has beaten all rivals out of the field in the length and continuity of his official life. With two short intervals he has been in office continuously from December, 1905, until this moment, and has weathered storms which would have wrecked almost any other man. Churchill's is in that respect the most extraordinary career in our time. There has been some luck in it; in his evolutions he just caught the changing tides of opinion which the more scientific calculators seemed to miss. His instincts were like Northcliffe's in this respect, and a good deal better than Lloyd George's, who always tried to forecast the ebb and flow mathematically before applying his emotions to the business. But while he is in this sense one of the great impressionables, Churchill has, of course, first-class wits and a remarkable power of inspiring fear in those whom it is important to conciliate. To get him safely into harness has been an important object with successive Cabinet-makers, and not least, I imagine, with Mr. Baldwin when he made him Chancellor of the Exchequer. For ten years or more it was almost a formula with Tories and Coalitionists alike that Winston must on no account be left loose in opposition.

McKenna was the perfect administrative man, bringing a cool, mathematical judgment to bear on the affairs of Department or Government, and about most of them exasperatingly right. There is nothing which irritates impressionist politicians more than to have such a man at their elbow in a Cabinet, and for years McKenna played this part to Lloyd George. I remember Lloyd George sending for me in the autumn of 1916 and telling me vehemently that there was no clash between him and Asquith, but that there was a clash and an incessant one between him and McKenna, and that the limits of his patience were being reached. A Chancellor of the Exchequer standing in those months for the despised cause of economy and puzzling his brain about the unsolved problem of paying Americans for their munitions was, I daresay, an active irritant to a War Minister, but the temperaments of the two men made their differences the more acute. If they could have been rolled into one, and McKenna's cool judgment and political rectitude have been added to Lloyd George's impetuousness and eloquence, an incomparable statesman would have resulted, but in different tenements they were constantly at war, and the inner history of those times was in no small degree the record of their battles.

Many of the hours that I would most wish to live over again have been spent with McKenna and his brother, Ernest, now, unhappily, gone from the scene, and I cannot pretend to speak impartially about so old and intimate a friend. For fifteen years and more I had from him the help and counsel which, coming from a man in the heart of affairs, are invaluable to the daily journalist. Hundreds of times I have sat down to write leading articles with the memory of our overnight talk in my mind. He did not "inspire" me or I consciously accept his inspiration; we simply talked things out together, and brought our combined wits to bear on any problem there might be. To me his habit of cool analysis was as refreshing as it was apparently irritating to Lloyd George; and possibly in the course of the years he may have got something from my more literary way of looking at things. When in after years he withdrew his allegiance from the Liberal party I flung out at him, and not only wrote tartly, but took the chair at an emergency meeting called at the National Liberal Club to stem the secessionist movement which his action seemed to invite. It is the fate of the journalist to smite his best friends, but McKenna understood and bore no malice.

Another intimate friend of these years to whom I was greatly attached was Arthur Markham. To the public he was best known as a great coal owner and mining engineer, but to me he was a warm-hearted, impulsive, generous man with a highly original outlook on affairs and a keen eye for the essentials in politics. He had an intuitive sympathy with the miners and an understanding of their point of view which, if only he had lived to these days, would have been of rare value to the country. He wore himself out with his unceasing activities, especially during the first years of the

War, and died young. I have seldom known a man who was so quickly kindled by any tale of injustice or who was readier to take all risks in obtaining redress. In the last weeks of his life, when he was very ill, he had greatly concerned himself about a young officer whom he believed to be evilly treated, and it was a pleasure to me to be able to take up this case after his death and carry it to a satisfactory conclusion.

Among other men who were coming up at this time I think of Alfred Emmott, a most useful and disinterested worker, whose recent death is a real public loss, and Walter Runciman, who remains to this day the living model of a well-equipped and compactly efficient politician. Then there was the brilliant trio of lawyers, Rufus Isaacs, John Simon and Stanley Buckmaster, all of whom were politicians first and lawyers after. Circumstances, rather than inclination, have compelled Simon to be the most brilliant advocate of these times; the law proved only a stepping-stone to Rufus Isaacs, and though Buckmaster came to the Woolsack, the political fervour which made him one of the finest of platform orators remained unquenched. The course of politics has borne hardly on Liberals of this generation, but some of them fortunately are still young enough to be able to look to the future, and some, like Herbert Gladstone, Sydney Buxton, Freeman Thomas and Herbert Samuel, have in the meantime, done highly distinguished service beyond the seas.

CHAPTER XIV

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

The Methods of the Editor—Foreign Correspondents—The Foreign Office—Grey and Tyrrell—The Alleged "Secrets" of Diplomacy—"The Organ of Sir Edward Grey"—The Ambassadors—Cambon—Metternich—Marschall von Bieberstein—von Kühlmann—Benckendorff—Mensdorff—San Giuliano—Imperiali—Whitelaw Reid—Walter Page—Appendix.

I

SO far I have said nothing of what was perhaps the most serious and anxious part of the work of a journalist in these years. That was in foreign affairs. The picture has often been painted of Liberal Ministers and journalists living in blithe ignorance during this formidable period, doing nothing to warn the country and being finally caught out by an utterly unforeseen catastrophe. It is undoubtedly true that most of us did not expect war in 1914. We shared the general optimism founded on the success of the Ambassadors' Conference in 1913 and thought that Anglo-German relations were gradually improving. Whether that was a well-founded hope which was shattered by the tragedy of Serajevo, or an illusion which was fostered by an enemy preparing to strike, cannot be debated here. Illusion or hope, I certainly entertained it and to that extent plead guilty, but with this exception, the eight years from 1906 onwards were a time of incessant perplexity and anxiety, in which one's thoughts were divided between efforts to compose the rising quarrel and measures to provide for the national safety, if it should involve us in war.

Let me describe briefly my own methods as an editor in dealing with foreign affairs. Like most evening papers, the *Westminster* relied mainly on the news agencies, Reuter's and others, for telegraphed news from foreign parts. To supplement this, it had a body of correspondents who were authorized to telegraph on special occasions, but advised as a rule to send their communications through the post. I was fortunate in obtaining the services of many very able men, and not being engaged in newsgathering they were able to write discursively and reflectively. In Paris I had for many years, as correspondent, an accomplished and well-informed Frenchman, M. Charles Legras, and he was succeeded by Sisley Huddleston, whose brilliant contributions during the Peace Conference caught Northcliffe's eye and led to his appointment as Paris correspondent to *The Times*. In Berlin there was R. E. C. Long, a most careful student of German politics and economics; and for several months in the year Prof. Pares, who has a profound knowledge of Russian affairs and Russian literature, wrote regularly from St. Petersburg. In Rome, there was Signor Cortesi, a leading member of the staff of the *Tribuna*, and there was scarcely a time when some volunteer was not roving the Balkans and the Near East and writing articles for the *Westminster*. Several of these correspondents not only wrote articles for publication, but wrote to me regularly about the inner currents of opinion and sundry other matters not ripe for print.

In this chain my chief gap was Vienna, and, looking back, I recognize that it was a serious one. We were all in those days much too prone to regard Austria-Hungary as an appanage of Germany; and consequently failed to realize the incontrollable nature of the forces at work within the Dual Monarchy, and how much they threatened the general peace. After reading a considerable number of the diplomatic documents and memoirs published since the war, I feel this to have been the chief deficiency in my own knowledge during these years, and I wish I had had more regular correspondence from Vienna. In default of it I was thrown back on occasional letters and special articles, and had no one on the spot to keep me regularly informed.

But a chief part of the sources of information were in London. There was the Foreign Office always accessible and the Ambassadors always willing to tell you anything about their own countries. My relations with Grey were rather those of a friend than a journalist. We had been at Oxford at the same time, and at the same college; I had seen him continuously from the time that he was Under-Secretary for Foreign Affairs, argued with him freely in the days of the Liberal League, and kept touch with his mind in foreign affairs in the subsequent years. Failing Rosebery, I greatly wished him to be Foreign Secretary, and was much troubled when he made difficulties or seemed, as he often did, to be in flight from public life. I knew him well enough to know that this was not a pose which could be ignored, but a serious inclination which had to be seriously resisted. When he became Foreign Secretary I tried to spare him the importunities of the journalist, and I never asked him to tell me anything that was secret or confidential. Contrary to the general belief—or at least the belief fostered by Grey's critics and opponents—secrets were of no importance in the diplomacy of these years, and it was sufficient for me to hear him talk openly and candidly of the known elements in the European problem. That was a very great advantage, and to be able to go to him when I was perplexed, without any air on my side of "pumping" him, or on his side of using me, was a great relief.

The reader who has had it hammered into him that "secret diplomacy" played a great part in those times, will, perhaps, be pulled up by hearing me say that secrets were of no importance. So let me pause for a moment to testify on this point. In after years it fell to me, in helping Grey to write his own narrative, to read through the chief part of the British diplomatic record of this time. Again and again, when I came to the principal transactions, I asked myself whether there was anything unknown to me before which would have changed the general judgment, if it had been known at the time, and whether there was anything withheld which ought to have been made known. And invariably I found myself answering that there was nothing. There were many interesting new details, much that helped to make real and vivid the story of Grey's own part, but the picture in broad outline remained as before, and none of its main features needed to be repainted or seriously modified. Grey's policy stood as a perfectly straightforward handling of the known facts and material, and whether he was right or wrong, neither supporters nor opponents have cause to say that if they had known more they would have judged differently. British action at all important moments was what it seemed to be, and its motives what they were supposed to be, and if others were deceived it was because they imagined the reality to be different from the appearance, and imputed to Grey Machiavellian designs of which he was entirely innocent.

My own relations with Grey were the subject of some gossip in foreign newspapers. The Germans appeared to think that he used me as his mouthpiece to test opinion and throw out ideas which it was not convenient to espouse officially. If I said something sharp about the French, as occasionally I did, they inferred that I was saying something which Grey would have liked to say himself, but thought it more prudent to convey through "his organ" in the Press. Explanations and disclaimers made no difference; these were said to be only common form in the relations of journalist and Foreign Secretary. The *Westminster* was widely quoted on the supposition that it expressed Grey's opinions and, as often as not, it was labelled in brackets as "the organ of Sir Edward Grey." The assumption was that it never could have expressed a positive opinion on foreign affairs without previous consultation with the Foreign Secretary.

This, I imagine, would be a correct assumption in regard to many foreign newspapers. But it is seldom true of English papers, and certainly was not true of the *Westminster*. I cannot remember a single occasion on which Grey asked me to write an article or prompted me to say one thing and not another. Articles on foreign affairs were written, like others, on the spur of the moment and, I am afraid, without much thought of what the Foreign Office might think about them. As a matter of fact, we were often out of step with the official view, and must often have said things which would have been vexatious to Grey if he had stopped to think that he was supposed to inspire them. But he did not stop to think about any of these things. Though always courteous and friendly to journalists, Grey had a real indifference to what was said about him which I have never seen equalled in a public man. Asquith met Press attacks with a stoicism which scarcely masked the fact that he felt their injustice; Lloyd George met them with a fiery determination to be even with the journalist; Grey neither met them nor seemed to feel them at all. His attitude was always that he was quite ready to go, if people wanted him to go, and that he had no reputation to nurse in view of his future career. In ninety-nine men out of a hundred this might have been dismissed as affectation, but in Grey it was absolutely honest, and he made you believe it.

There were drawbacks to this attitude, but as between colleagues and friends it had one great advantage. One could discuss everything with Grey absolutely on its merits. There was never that lurking sense of what would be to his advantage or what might be embarrassing to him which makes so much political talk a fencing with the realities. He faced everything and discussed everything in an extraordinarily impersonal way, as if he were off the scene and bringing the cool judgment of the impartial outsider to bear on it. He had a remarkable faculty of seeing complicated and even personal issues in this simple way. When I wanted something a little more sophisticated I went from him to Tyrrell, then his private secretary, who played over the same subject with a keen and brilliant wit and the surest eye for its personal equations. Grey's view was sometimes—or so it seemed to me—a little too simple for a complicated occasion, and then Tyrrell filled it out from his unfailing store of variegated detail. To pass from the one room to the other was a liberal education.

II

Then there were the Ambassadors, and I was often in their company. Cambon was a classic figure. With his courtly manner and air of taking everything seriously, he seemed to come straight out of the eighteenth century. It was a delight to listen to his precise staccato French, with never a word dropped or blurred; and that too, I have been told by Frenchmen, belonged to a bygone period. He was manifestly adroit, and yet did not seem to be uncandid. He knew that a good diplomatist never appears to be diplomatic. My first acquaintance with him was in the days before the Entente, and I saw him intimately on some occasions when our relations with his country were at the danger point. He was always unruffled, but he never disguised the point of danger, and spoke very seriously of what he feared might happen. Then and later I met him frequently, and have recollections of many pleasant parties at the Embassy. Sometimes he lunched or dined with us and talked intimately to small parties of our friends. He understood English perfectly, and I believe talked it adequately, but he decided early in the day to keep the advantage of speaking in his own tongue, and he never could be induced to depart from it, whatever the emergency. The choice of language is no small part of the diplomatic art, and it may vary with the political atmosphere. In the early days after the Boer War, Botha, who talked fluent English in private, became ignorant of our language on all public and official occasions. When the full reconciliation was effected he at once began to make admirable public speeches in English.

My wife and I were intimate with Metternich, the German Ambassador, for many years. I retain an affectionate regard for him, and am glad to be able to say that our friendship has survived the great catastrophe of his hopes and mine. A yearly visit from him is one of the pleasures to which we still look forward. He was a very honest man and very loyal servant of his Government, so loyal that he would never admit even in private that any step that he was instructed to take was open to question. On the other hand, he would let me state my opinions with the utmost freedom and be content to say that he was obliged to disagree with them. Several times when Anglo-German relations seemed most critical we dined with him alone, and had useful, if rather gloomy, evenings. At the height of the war fever in 1914, I was charged with having been too intimate with him, but the whole of our conversations in those years might be reproduced without offending the most ardent patriot on either side. My constant theme was that the German challenge to us at sea governed all our relations with Germany; his that our unfriendliness had made the German fleet a necessity. He answered me thus as a good German defending the Government he served, but it has since come out that no German abroad was more faithful in warning that Government of the peril they ran when they threatened Britain at sea. Tirpitz, indeed, counted him as one of his most persistent and formidable opponents and pursued him with great vindictiveness after, as before, the war.

All this is well known in Germany, but it is little known in this country, and I am, therefore, adding as an appendix to this chapter a document of high interest and value which, in justice to Metternich, ought, I think, to be seen and read by English readers. It is the memorandum which at the beginning of 1912 he drew up at the request of the German Chancellor, marshalling the arguments against the new supplementary Naval Bill (*Flottennovelle*) then about to be introduced. This is thrown into the form of a letter to be presented by the Chancellor to the Emperor, and what became of it is uncertain. What is certain is that the protest contained in it was overborne, and that after the failure of the conversations initiated by Haldane in the following months, the new Bill went forward. For some reason or other this memorandum was omitted from the published German documents and only saw the light last year in the Hamburg monthly periodical, *Europäische Gespräche* (February, 1926), from which I have translated the principal portions of it. The argument is cast in the form which would be suitable to a German Minister, arguing from a German point of view against the particular measure proposed, and lays stress on the danger to the original Navy law caused by a new proposal which might precipitate a conflict before the fleet as originally planned was completed. This was a consideration which might be expected to appeal to Tirpitz, and which the Chancellor, if he took up the argument, would naturally elaborate. But running through the memorandum is an acute sense of the danger and unwisdom of the entire naval policy which threatened or seemed to threaten the existence of Great Britain, and by so doing made all efforts to maintain friendship waste labour. "The stake is the existence of the Empire and with it your Majesty's authority and throne," says the writer. "Where is the prize of victory, where the object which would be worth this stake? . . . We stake everything without knowing what we wish or what we can gain. . . . We have no world empire either to hold together or to defend. We cannot go further in establishing this fleet without calling the world into the arena."

I know nothing about the sequel, but Metternich was withdrawn from London a few months later, and I think it may be assumed that his departure was connected with the definite victory of the policy against which he had protested so vigorously. It would not be true to say that the new Navy Law of 1912 directly influenced our action in 1914, but it *is* true that German naval policy was the main factor in throwing us on the side of France and Russia, and therefore in determining the course of events which led up to the Great War. Metternich saw this only too clearly, and he was far too honest a man to play the part of softening the issue which, according to von Bülow, was the aim of German diplomacy during "the danger period" when the fleet was building. He saw, as Berlin did not, that the threat to us by sea touched our very existence, and that no smooth words could get over the hard facts or prevent us from replying in a manner that was bound to strain our relations with Germany. Sometimes he would appeal to me for help to enable him to put a better face on the situation as seen from London, and all I could reply was that we could give him no help if his Government was bent on another Navy Bill.

I am glad for his own sake that he went when he did. There followed a short interlude of Marschall von Bieberstein, who died before his intentions or those of his Government in appointing him were disclosed. He was a vast man in the grip of a mortal illness. I had one long talk with him, and he assured me that the Anglo-German quarrel was a misunderstanding which he hoped to clear up. He was also at some pains to convince me that he too had been misunderstood, and that he was neither the big-stick Prussian nor the deceitful diplomatist which, on his previous record at the German Foreign Office and as Ambassador at Constantinople, he was supposed to be. It was believed that his appointment meant a serious effort to open a new chapter, and when Lichnowsky succeeded him, this impression seemed to be confirmed. Lichnowsky was charming and frankly Anglophil; and his brilliant wife rapidly became one of the most popular hostesses in London. Everyone liked them, and he seemed specially to have the knack of getting on with Grey. I have memories of much agreeable talk with him and of delightful hospitality at Carlton House Terrace. It was impossible to doubt his transparent honesty or his deep and passionate desire that peace should be kept between his country and ours.

Then there was von Kühlmann, the Councillor of the German Embassy, and during the war Foreign Secretary in Germany, whom I knew well for many years. In fact, we all knew him on whichever side in politics we happened to be. He was a very able man of somewhat enigmatic character, but the notion that he was a deep kind of anti-British intriguer is, I believe, unfounded. I took him to be a typical kind of German "real politician" measuring most things by the amount of force which could be brought to bear by one side or the other, and anxious to keep his Government well informed about the play of forces in this country. He was not pro-British or anti-British, but just doing the business of his country, and doing it, according to his own lights, with great dutifulness. His standards were too Prussian to enable him easily to understand the English temperament, and he seemed to be in a perpetual puzzle about the Liberal party and its odd way of conducting itself. I think his judgment was undoubtedly that friendship with us was politically desirable for Germany, but if so there was no sentiment about it, and he never pretended that there was. I found him agreeable and friendly, and took him as I found him. In talk with him I sought to discover the German view, and he sought to discover the English view. We pumped each other frankly, and there was no deception on either side. He certainly never gave his countrymen away, and I hope he would say the same of me.

III

Of the other Ambassadors, Benckendorff stands out most in my memory. In appearance he came nearer than any to the ideal diplomat, and really deserved that hard-ridden epithet "distinguished." His face, with its clear-cut profile and high forehead, was singularly interesting and mobile, and bespoke the accomplished and cultivated man of the world. He spoke English fluently, but seasoned it with neat French idioms and an occasional German word. His talk was in form just what novelists put into the mouths of Ambassadors, but as he used it, it was vivid and natural and an extremely interesting and original use of English. He wrote admirable letters and despatches, as is proved by the specimens published by the Bolshevists, and a collection of his letters would probably be among the liveliest and most intimate records of this time. He seemed to have all serviceable history at his fingers' ends; he abounded in diplomatic lore, and poured out anecdotes and personal reminiscences which were always appropriate and never long. He was a connoisseur of art, with a fine taste shared by his wife, which was reflected in the appointments of the Embassy and redeemed it from the usual official splendours. I have a piece of furniture in my house now which I always associate with him. It stood in the dining-room of our London house, and one night, when he was dining with us, a debate arose among our guests as to its date and nationality. As soon as he heard, Benckendorff just looked up and said that there need be no dispute about it; it was Swiss of the early seventeenth century, and should be called a "buffet" and not a sideboard, as my other guests had called it.

He told me that if I would come to the Embassy soon after twelve any morning I should nearly always find him there and ready for a talk. I did go pretty often and sometimes, I will confess, for the mere pleasure of hearing him talk. He gave me whimsical but kindly descriptions of the Russian people, and of the political ideas which ran through a million villages across the great expanse of Russia. He threw up his hands in a comic despair when I asked him how I was to justify the ways of the Czardom to the Liberal readers of the *Westminster Gazette*. But he by no means confined himself to Russian affairs. He painted rapid and vigorous sketches of the relations of the Powers and the play of personalities among them, and was generally clear and sagacious in his forecasts. He said to me repeatedly that a war between Russia and Germany would be the greatest possible calamity for both countries, and that he looked to the Entente to restrain the wild men equally in Russia and Germany.

The Austro-Hungarian Ambassador, Mensdorff, was an extremely agreeable man of the world, whose hospitality was always a pleasure, but he was a lighter weight politically. He did not assert himself in what is called propaganda, and most of us journalists remained under the impression that

Austrian policy could be sufficiently ascertained from the Germans. Then there were the Italians, first San Giuliano, whom I remember as an extremely clever and adroit man, and after him the Marchese Imperiali, a genial and popular giant whom everybody wanted to please, if reasonable occasion offered. He had a rather disconcerting habit of wringing his hands and speaking in a tremolo, but he was very much in earnest, and through and through a good fellow and very honest. Italy could hardly have been better served.

American Ambassadors stood outside the European affairs with which we were mostly concerned in these years, and we knew them as friends rather than as officials and politicians. John Hay I knew well, and had much intimate talk with him on literary as well as political matters. Whitelaw Reid played "the magnificent man" in splendour at Dorchester House, and ruled in London as *the* American host. But he was by no means the mere millionaire and, as a newspaper proprietor and old journalist, he had an interest in newspaper men which was displayed in a kindly way to London journalists. I owed to him the opportunity of good talk with W. J. Bryan, who seemed oddly placed in the Renaissance atmosphere of Dorchester House, but was fortunately not at all quenched by it. Reid, himself, had considerable literary accomplishments, and there was no one to whom one could go more safely for a point in American history or constitution. My record contains a pleasant little correspondence with him about an essay which he wrote on Abraham Lincoln, and which raised a point I had discussed in earlier days with John Hay.

Walter Page is a beloved memory, and his wife, I am glad to say, still a very dear friend. He was, I suppose, the very best friend this country ever had in time of need, and he was able to be so, just because he was intensely American. Some of his countrymen—and I am not sure that Wilson himself was not one of them—supposed him to be a sentimental Anglophil who had lost his American moorings. Nothing could have been farther from the truth. In his early years, at all events, he was a zealous partisan of the American way of life against our way, and if in the later years he was useful to us, it was precisely because he kept a clear perception of the differences between the two countries, and was quite frank about what his people would and would not stand. Never at any moment did he let his vision get blurred on this essential point, as a merely sentimental friend almost certainly would have done. I seldom had need to see him as an official, but I often saw him as a friend, and have delightful memories of his original and discursive talk, his keen interest and desire to understand what was new and perplexing to him, and then in the last years his manly sympathy with the British people and appreciation of their character and effort.

Such was the personnel in these testing years, and it was an editor's business to keep touch with them all. But in addition to this part of the work, there came to the office a stream of unofficial foreigners—politicians and experts bringing introductions from their own embassies or from friends abroad—all of whom had to be talked to and sometimes entertained. The enormous pains which is taken by people all over the world to instruct an editor and to keep him to the right path is little realized by the readers of newspapers, and I confess that there were times when I craved mercy from my preceptors and wished that they might bestow their attention upon brother editors who walked in darkness. On the other hand I had unlimited opportunities of sucking other people's brains, and an editor does not know the beginning of his business unless he is an accomplished and remorseless vampire.

APPENDIX TO CHAPTER XIV

Memorandum by Count Metternich on German Naval Policy, January 10, 1912

Your Majesty will permit me once more very respectfully to explain the reasons which lead me to perceive a serious danger to the interests of the Empire and to your Majesty yourself in a supplementary Bill for the Navy (*Flottennovelle*) shortly to be introduced.

Until a few months ago the existing Navy Law was regarded as sufficient for defence and for the promotion of the objects for which it was promulgated. Even Admiral von Tirpitz was an exponent of this point of view. I am, therefore, unable, without further argument, to accept the conclusion that the Navy Law designed for the purpose of furnishing us with a powerful fleet, and hitherto in the opinion of the technical authorities sufficient for that purpose, has now revealed gaps which have to be made good by a supplementary Bill. The new factor, therefore, consists not in an inadequate Naval Law whose deficiencies have to be made good, but in the events which have taken place on the political stage during the autumn and winter.

The question before us now is whether these events compel us to undertake increased armaments on sea and on land. The French, by putting forth all their energy in the course of the last few years, have approached our military strength in such a way as to impose on us a further strengthening of our fighting forces on land, where the decision for us must always take place. We enjoy in that respect the double advantage that the strengthening of our army goes forward in relatively shorter time, and that the accumulation of the reserves from year to year involves a further automatic increase, whereas the French, in consequence of the deficiency of their man power, have practically reached the utmost limits of their land armaments, and cannot pick us up, so that the advantage which we shall have obtained over them remains absolute.

But when we embark on increased armaments at sea, that is to say, against England, we do not gain even a relative advantage. For there can be no doubt that England will reply with a naval establishment which will leave our supplementary Bill far behind. The English First Lord of the Admiralty has publicly announced that this year's Naval Estimates will undergo a certain reduction compared with the previous year's, if other countries do not undertake new armaments. In the contrary event, the English establishment will be increased to maintain the preponderance which England claims for herself on the sea. There is no doubt that England is, for the time being, in a position to maintain the lead that she has at present. We are thus likely through our supplementary Bill not only to drive our most formidable opponent on the sea off her plan of reducing her naval estimates, but to compel her to an increase which will shift the balance of power between her and us to her advantage. For, according to all reports which come to us, the British Government is determined to reply to a German increase with an exceptionally energetic strengthening of its own sea power. As provision for the expenditure, it will at length, from that beginning, start on the road of raising loans. On the other hand, if there is no new German Navy Bill, it will reduce its expenditure on the fleet as compared with the previous year.

If we are content with the Naval Law which the experts have hitherto acknowledged to be right and sufficient, time will be on our side. Our coast defences, Heligoland and the Kaiser Wilhelm Canal, will after some years afford our fleet increased protection. The fleet itself increases from year to year and will develop uniformly. If we can ensure five years' peace with England, our naval position will be such that the development of the Naval Law will be assured in such a way that its professed aim will be attained, and even the strongest Naval Power be unable to attack us with a light heart. Our efforts must, therefore, be directed to the possibility of a further peaceful development of our fleet during its foundation years. The actual increase of power which a supplementary law would bring us will not begin to be realized for three or four years, whereas we endanger the peaceful construction of our fleet during this critical time by a supplementary Bill.

Up till now we have publicly declared in the Reichstag and before all the world that the Navy Law sufficed us for defence and sea power. In its preamble we have set out the theory of risk for an assailant as being likely to deter the strongest sea power. If we now come again with a new proposal and give it the appearance of being a consequence of the political tension of the last few years, the world and the strongest Sea Power would be compelled to say that we are going beyond the theory of risk and are arming for a war with it. England will take up the competition in armaments, since her existence depends on it. Whether this will lead in the near future to actual war no one at the moment can foresee. On the other hand, a renewal of the political tension which, on the English side at least, has been relieved since the settlement of the Morocco crisis, may be expected with certainty. On the French side the tension still persists. It is widely felt that France has let slip a favourable opportunity of making war in alliance with England. In England, on the other hand, there is satisfaction at having escaped the danger of war and, through the settlement of the Morocco question, the obligation to stand by France. . . . In short, the Entente shows rents which would already have been widened if public opinion in our country had assumed a less threatening attitude towards England and not deliberately rejected the hand stretched out to us from there. . . .

Our two Allies watch with increasing uneasiness, with anxiety and mistrust, at all events without goodwill, the sharpening of our relations with England, and the world in general will draw the conclusion from another Bill—as consequence and answer to the crisis of the past year—that we are arming for war; and will revive the unjustified reproach which represents us as disturbers of the peace. However that may be, England will make ready for the war of decision to which we appear to be driving her with our new Navy Bill, and which to-day she still does not desire. In such a case she could not, in spite of her need for peace, let any favourable opportunity for the war of decision with us go by, without hurting her vital interest (*Lebensinteresse*). The favourable opportunities, however, are to be found in the next years before our fleet is built, and before the first ship that the new Bill can bring us is on the water and ready for war. . . .

At this moment a new fleet law brings us no advantage, but only harm. Through it we should be spoiling perhaps the last prospect of a reconciliation with England. I have to the utmost of my endeavour followed Your Majesty's policy of seeking an agreement with England. If these endeavours have till now led to no satisfactory result, this is principally due to the mistrust which has grown up in England on account of our naval policy, the policy of our Naval Law and these supplementary Bills. We can no longer be under any illusion about the fact that the English Entente system and the English hostility to us rests primarily on the fear of our growing power at sea. The mistrust may be false and unfounded; we have, nevertheless, to reckon with the fact that it exists, and if we do not reckon with it, the fact will reckon with us. We should not, therefore, without compelling reasons, afford fresh grounds for this mistrust. I have steadily and openly taken my stand on the full and undiminished execution of the existing Naval Law and have left the English Government under no doubt that we are not open to negotiation on this point. For that reason principally our negotiations have come to nothing (*im Sande verlaufen*).

Now for the first time England shows signs of an unambiguous desire to approach us, and indeed, without expecting any concession from us on the Naval question as it stands at present—but not as it will be after a new Navy Bill—England seems to be feeling a sort of regret for its behaviour in the past years, and public opinion as a whole is drawing the Government to attempt a reconciliation with us. This appears from the reports of your Majesty's Ambassador in London, and there is a general wish only to wait until our elections are over to enter into negotiations with us, and to make concession about Colonial territory. Your Majesty now desires deeds instead of words. Deeds must, however, be prepared for. We cannot expect that the English Government will, without first generally ascertaining our wishes, suddenly come forward with deeds which, so far as they know, may be rejected with scorn in the prevailing mood at the moment in Germany. Deeds are prepared by the skilful use of favourable moods and tendencies. They will be frustrated if the favourable moment is let go by unused, or even if, without compelling reason, operations are undertaken which make impossible a settlement with an enemy whom one wishes for a friend. We cannot expect that England will immediately throw on the scrap heap the edifice of her foreign policy, which rests on the Entente, and march over with drums beating and colours flying into our camp. Yet much is already gained if through advantageous arrangements in the department of practical Colonial policy, we can show the world, and the German people especially, that our opposition to England is not unbridgeable, and that reciprocal relations still permit of favourable arrangements. In that way the ground will be levelled for a further rapprochement, and the Entente will lose its sting if, in spite of its existence, Anglo-German negotiations run a satisfactory course for us. The Entente will automatically be loosened through a friendly agreement between England and us, and England will be on her guard against endangering by an aggressive application of the Entente the advantage, bought by sacrifices, of the better understanding with us which at present she is seeking.

After arguing again that a peaceful disposition is beginning to show in England, whereas in Paris the talk is of war in the coming spring, and that Admiral von Tirpitz cannot desire his own work—the completion of the Navy Law—to be imperilled by a breach with England, Count Metternich continues :—

To act in spite, *ab irato*, against one's own advantage is not policy, or at least not sound policy. Granted that England has treated us badly, to reply to that with a new Navy Bill which must make our position worse in all directions would be a short-lived satisfaction and bring a long repentance. It cannot be seriously contended that remaining within the existing Navy Law—i.e., no new Bill—signifies a cowardly flinching before English threats. Flinching? Why? So far as I know no one is attempting to forbid us to introduce a new Navy Bill. It lies in our own free judgment to introduce it or not. No one is attempting to interfere with us or to hinder us. He, however, who is building a fleet of the dimensions of ours does wisely not to challenge fate.

Count Metternich then proceeds to combat the idea that German public opinion requires the increase, and suggests that official influences should be brought to bear on the Press and other measures taken to allay the excitement on this subject. He repeats that, if the necessity were proved, he would, in spite of all the drawbacks and dangers, support the increase, but not thinking it proved and thinking it politically mischievous, he is strongly opposed to it. He concludes :—

A naval policy which goes outside the limits of the Navy Law drives, in my conviction, to war. It is possible that we shall be victorious. It is probable that time will not be left to us to complete our armaments. The odds then are against us. The stake is the existence of the Empire, and with it Your Majesty's authority and throne. Where is the prize of victory, where the object which would be worth this stake? I am unable to discover them. What Sicilian or Carthaginian coast beckons to us if we challenge the modern Carthage to battle? Where lies the necessity for us to sharpen the antagonism towards England, if we cannot take possession of her inheritance? We stake everything without knowing what we wish or can gain. Our Navy Law is creating a fleet which commands respect and procures it for us. If we go further we create a danger for ourselves without corresponding advantage, since we have no world empire either to hold together or to defend. We cannot go further in establishing it without calling the world into the arena.

I have expressed my opinion to Your Majesty with the frankness to which I feel compelled by my duty in this serious and important matter. Several State Secretaries and Ministers share my opinion. If, nevertheless, I do not raise the Cabinet question, it is solely because, as a faithful servant of Your Majesty, I desire to avoid precipitating in the middle of an election a Ministerial crisis, the cause of which could not for any length of time remain secret—a thing which would be undesirable for our domestic politics and which would create a damaging impression abroad. But I cannot help even now, before Your Majesty, before history and my conscience, declining responsibility for the serious consequences which, as I am convinced, a new Navy Bill will have for the Empire in the time that is coming. Should this be introduced against my advice, the responsibility will fall on him who has known how to prevail on Your Majesty.

CHAPTER XV

MORE ABOUT FOREIGN AFFAIRS

The Supposed Dangers of War—Friction with France—Visits to Paris—Lord Esher and His Rôle—His Influence with King Edward—Work for the Territorials—The Coming of the Entente—An Inadequate View—Rosebery's Opinion—The German Counter-Attack—Talks with Cambon and Metternich—A *Fortnightly* Article and Its Consequences—The Difficulties of the Journalist—Military Conversations and Preparations—The Compulsory Service Movement—Talks with Lord Roberts—Voluntary Service Defence.

I

WHEN I first came on the scene as a journalist it was an accepted axiom that if there was any danger of war for this country, it was from France or Russia. In my first fifteen years there were periodic Russian scares, and at least two occasions on which we seemed to be on the verge of war with France. The anti-Turkish agitation which drew British Liberals to the side of Russia between 1877 and 1885 had died down, and in the last of these years Mr. Gladstone himself had used very grave language about Russian aggression on the borders of Afghanistan. The Liberal Press generally preached non-intervention, and the Conservative Press under Salisbury's guidance leant towards an understanding with Germany as the acceptable way of countering French opposition in Egypt. This was the traditional policy, so far as it can be called by that name, which Lord Salisbury handed on to Lord Rosebery and which Rosebery pursued during his years at the Foreign Office.

Lord Grey has told the story of the sudden Siamese crisis with France in 1894, and well I remember a certain evening party—I think it was at Tweedmouth's house in Park Lane—when a Liberal Minister told me under the seal of secrecy that we might be at war with France the next day. For me it was the first look into the mouth of the cannon, and to this day I remember the shock of it. I had never thought seriously of war with a neighbour in Europe, and now I was listening not to gossips and *flâneurs* but to a man in authority who said that we should probably have to face it "the next day." The merits of the affair were obscure, but it was said positively that France was trying to fasten a quarrel on to us, and that, however much we might wish to avoid it, we should have no choice. It seemed impossible and incredible and I went home in dire perplexity and anxiety, but with a new sense of what politics meant.

This blew over and the public, fortunately, knew little about it, but I was left with an uneasiness about our relations with France which certainly did not diminish as time went on. There was a chronic quarrel between the newspapers of the two countries; there were points of contact and collision between their Governments all over the world, there was the unending friction about Egypt. Two years after the Siamese business the Fashoda incident caused deep resentment in France, and then followed the South African War and the Dreyfus affair running parallel courses and causing the quarrel to boil up to a point at which there would almost certainly have been war, if there had been no Channel between us. All the jingo elements in this country were as much inflamed against France as they were later against Germany, and it was nearly as dangerous to be "pro-French" in those days as it was afterwards to be "pro-German." Similarly in France all the Chauvinist elements and most of the newspapers were arrayed against Britain.

As a Liberal journalist I had only one rule at that time in foreign affairs, which was, so far as I could, to pour oil on troubled waters, and I did everything that a writer could to keep this quarrel within bounds. I went to Paris generally twice in the year to see and talk to French journalists and politicians, and saw many of them when they came to London. I was much helped by one of the cleverest of the young French diplomatists, de Billy, who was first in London and afterwards at the Quai d'Orsay, and with whom I had much intimate talk. There were great difficulties, and for a long time the

French Foreign Office seemed proof against all wooing. Though they were afterwards our friends, it seemed almost impossible to get on to a friendly footing with men like Hanotaux and Delcassé, and they were full of grievances against us. The journalist who went either to the British Foreign Office or the French in those days came away with a long tale of the charges and allegations which each Government preferred against the other. When the Dreyfus case followed the Fashoda crisis, the cause of goodwill seemed very nearly hopeless. On this the Liberal Press joined in the chorus with the Conservative, and the French asked furiously why they could not be left to clear up a purely domestic scandal without this intrusion of foreign scolding and denunciation. I confess I sympathized with them and took occasion to point out that, if the affair itself was a warning, their handling of it and the logical and courageous way in which they confessed their mistake and did justice openly and publicly was an example to all their neighbours. For saying that, I was told that I was dealing in evasive apologies for my French friends.

While we denounced the French for the Dreyfus case, they more than returned the fire for our supposed iniquities in South Africa. We were drenched with invective in the French newspapers, and the cartoonists were intolerably scurrilous. I was in Paris at the end of January, 1900, and a well-informed Frenchman told me angrily that we might "thank our friend the German Emperor" that all Europe was not at our throats. It was certainly the opinion in France at that time that Germany was blocking the projected anti-British coalition, and I think the German documents since published prove it to have been well-founded. But they also show that this coalition was always a phantom, since whatever quarrel we might have had with the French, the quarrel between France and Germany was far deeper and more fundamental.

When the Boer War was over, the atmosphere began gradually to change. French and English journalists still snapped at each other from time to time, but generally they left each other alone. I cannot say what happened on the French side, but, so far as I know, no cue was given to the

Press on the British side. Though foreigners are slow to believe it, it was never the habit of the British Foreign Office to inspire the newspapers, and Liberal editors certainly did not seek official guidance when a Unionist Government was in power. We groped our way and wrote by the light of nature. But one very good friend I had at this time who helped me from going far astray, so far as essential facts were concerned, and that was Lord Esher, the "Reggie Brett" of the earlier days.

II

Esher seemed to know everything and to know it correctly. I met him first in the company of Stead, to whom he was very sincerely, if rather oddly, attached, and I was quickly struck by his extraordinary fund of knowledge and his complete detachment from all political factions. He seemed to be handling all the axes and yet to have none to grind. He judged us all, Liberals and Tories, with a serene impartiality which enabled him to form the shrewdest opinions on points in the political game at home; and at the same time he seemed to be keeping watch over the whole European scene, and calculating the play of its forces and personalities with the same unruffled serenity.

Esher has made enemies as well as friends, and to some people he was a perpetual irritant. But he stands out in my memory as one of the most remarkable men of these times, and I do not doubt that he has rendered great services to this country. Though he had the choice of high office, his only official position has been that of permanent member of the Committee of Imperial Defence, of which he was himself the chief originator. But that sufficed him, and he had the wisdom to see that taking office and accepting party attachments would be fatal to the part he had marked out for himself. That was a unique part, and I know nothing like it unless it be the position of Colonel House—an entirely different sort of man—under the Wilson régime in America. So far as this country is concerned, Esher invented this part, elaborated it and brought it to a rare perfection. It was said, when he was in France during the war, that he wore a uniform of his own designing. The niceties which distinguish one kind of higher uniform from another generally escape my civilian eye, and I cannot say if this is true; but if it was, he thoroughly deserved to have a uniform to himself, and showed his usual sense of fitness in devising one. The position was his own invention, and if he needed an official dress, this, too, ought to have been designed by himself.

That he kept his balance through all these years, and did so with the consent of everybody (or nearly everybody), is in itself evidence of a rare skill. He *was* very skilful, and in a manner which sometimes made one think of an Italian of the Renaissance rather than of an Englishman doing an Englishman's job. But with it all, he had a solid capacity for hard and plain work which would have done credit to any Chairman of Quarter Sessions. He laboured indefatigably at organizing the Territorial Army, and since he caused me to be co-opted as a member of the London County Association, I can testify that he was not only a first-rate chairman of that body, but that he knew every detail of the organization and had his hand on the work of all the committees. Seeing him at work, it was impossible to think of him as the mere *flâneur* and busybody that some people supposed him to be.

There was much jealousy of his intimacy with King Edward, but this too he won on his merits. The King was far too shrewd a man to yield himself to a mere courtier, and he got from Esher just the cool kind of estimate of men and things which a constitutional sovereign needs to have, and which he generally cannot get from either politicians or courtiers. Esher, no doubt, seasoned it with a good deal of the light gossip and personal detail that King Edward enjoyed, but I never once heard it alleged that he made mischief or poisoned the King's mind against any individual. Another generation may see more of the inner records of these times, and if so, they will learn a good deal about Esher and the part he played.

When in later years he came out of his appointed rôle, the result seemed to me less happy. Especially, I thought, his criticisms of Asquith and Kitchener unfair, and I retorted rather savagely in the *Westminster*. But at the time of which I am writing, he gave me invaluable help which I should be very ungrateful not to acknowledge. Through him I was able to keep in touch with the larger questions which the Committee of Defence was beginning to debate, and to get some grasp of the military problem which Haldane was presently to take in hand. Esher, I think it was, who passed me on to "Jackie" Fisher, with whom till the end of his life I was on terms of warm friendship. Thus from 1900 to 1906, though I had no contact with the Foreign Office, I saw the European problem, as it concerned this country, shaping itself on the naval and military side, and little by little the enormous importance of the German challenge by sea was brought home to me. But it was only very gradually that this was related in my mind with our policy towards France. When, early in the year 1904, I was shown in confidence a draft of the proposed convention with the French, I expressed the utmost pleasure, not at all because I thought it a point in the game against Germany, but simply and solely because it seemed to be the consummation of the friendly policy which for years I had been advocating in the *Westminster*.

III

This was a very inadequate view, which seems hardly excusable in the light of later knowledge. I put side by side, as parallel examples of ignorance at this time, the British view of the French Entente and the German view of the challenge to Britain by sea. The island did not understand the continent, and the continent did not understand the island. *We* argued that friendship with France must be wholly good, and that in any case it was no concern of Germany's what we and the French did together. The Germans argued that they had an absolute right to extend their sea power, and that we had no right to claim a supremacy at sea which no Power claimed on land. *We* did not see that our joining up with France was for them a dangerous disarrangement of the balance of forces on which they relied for their safety; the Germans did not see that in a fighting world supremacy at sea was vital to our safety. It is only in later times when I have read the German documents of the last years of the nineteenth and early years of the twentieth century that I have realized the shock that the Entente was to the German idea of security. German diplomacy in these years seems to me to have been a disastrous series of blunders, but there is one thread running through the whole record, and that is a perpetual anxiety lest England should join up with France and Russia, and the conviction that a real written understanding between England and France would be the heaviest blow that the Central Powers could suffer. What is strange and utterly perplexing in the conduct of the Germans is that, with this anxiety perpetually weighing on them, they should, time after time, have rejected our overtures and committed themselves to a policy which, the slightest consideration ought to have shown them, was bound to throw us into the arms of France. In this matter personal factors seem to have weighed heavily—the instability and inconsequence of the Emperor, the sinister fanaticism of von Holstein, the grim tenacity of Tirpitz, the clever levity of Bülow.

I am not for a moment suggesting that if we had realized what we were doing we should not have entered into the Entente with France. On the contrary, I think that the last of the German blunders, the building of a great fleet, had by that time made it imperative that we should heal our quarrel with France. But I do think that we should have understood what we were doing and what in all probability, according to the logic of the Continental Alliances, would be the consequences. Being Continentals, the French no doubt understood, but we, being insular, had stood outside the realities that were instinctively apprehended in Europe. We had followed Continental politics, but in a bookish and student-like way; we thought of ourselves as lookers-on rather than participators; we had looked on without emotion and were mostly unaware that we had plunged into the heart of the European contention. It was the emotional perception which failed us.

Among men of the first rank Rosebery was, I think, the only one who saw further. He had been intimate with the Bismarcks, father and son; he had a keen eye for the forces at work in Europe, and was in that sense more European than any other British statesman. Often in after years I recalled my talks with him at this time. He had deep misgivings, not perhaps because he disapproved of the policy, but because he thought that neither the Government, nor those of us who were backing the Government, understood what we were doing. He said that the Entente was a momentous act of policy, and declined altogether to argue it in the sentimental terms that were being applied to it in Parliament and the Press. At the time I felt chilled, and thought his attitude the result of the many things he had suffered at the hands of the French Ministers when he was Foreign Secretary. It was not so, as the sequel proved. He was entirely right in judging the Entente to be a momentous event carrying political consequences far beyond what could be read in the text of the Convention, and I should have done well as a journalist to give more heed to his warning.

What followed was in the natural order of events to the "real-politicians" playing the European game, but to us it was mystifying and irrational. We judged events by the text of the Convention, and we thought it outrageous that the Germans should seek to victimize France for having come to a friendly settlement with us about sundry Colonial difficulties. We pointed to the fact that a year before they had said that they had no serious interest in Morocco, about which they were now to all appearances deliberately picking a quarrel with France. The European "real-politicans" knew that Morocco and the text of the Convention were only pretexts, and that the Germans were getting back at the French for having disturbed the balance of forces in Europe. This is how the game had been played in Europe for the previous thirty years, and how Europeans expected it to be played. Morocco and the Convention were nothing compared with the fact that we had stepped out of our isolation and publicly taken sides with France. Were we really so simple, asked the Germans, that we could do a thing like that and be surprised at the consequences?

In any case, we were sharply disillusioned before the end of 1905. The Kaiser's landing at Tangier and the violent diplomacy which forced the resignation of Delcassé left no doubt that, whatever our intentions might be, the Germans meant to take them as hostile and to break the Entente, if they could. In vain we protested that the last thing we desired was that friendship with France should exclude friendship with Germany, and quoted Grey's phrase about the Entente with France being the working model for other Ententes. This was said to be mere British hypocrisy. By the middle of 1905 it looked as if the country were committed to a dangerous quarrel with Germany, and we reflected gloomily on the legacy that would fall to the Liberal Government which we had hoped would have its hands free for domestic policy.

IV

Two occasions come back to me with special clearness from the autumn of this year. One was a dinner given to Cambon by Grey at Brooks's at which Haldane and I were the other guests; the other a dinner given by Haldane to Metternich, at which Grey, Asquith and I were the other guests. At the first we discussed the French side of the affair, at the other the German. Cambon was very serious, and even then feeling his way to discover what a Liberal Government would do, if it came into power. Grey was forthcoming but non-committal; and Cambon had to be content with the assurance that Liberal sympathies were all on the side of friendship with France, and that if a Liberal Government came to power there would be the same desire as before to make a success of the Entente. The evening with Metternich was more searching, because he spoke perfect English and we were more eloquent in our own tongue. We sat till near midnight going in detail over the whole ground and the various causes of quarrel which we alleged against the Germans or they against us. Metternich conceded nothing and we thought him rather stubborn, but the occasion provided much food for thought.

In the following days it occurred to me that it might be useful to gather up the results of this talk in some more consecutive form than was possible in the *Westminster*, so I sat down and wrote the article on Anglo-German relations which appeared in the *Fortnightly Review* of November, 1905. To that there was a curious sequel. In the last week of October I was at an evening party at the French Embassy and, meeting there a certain German diplomatist, I mentioned to him incidentally that I had written something which he might think worth glancing at about Anglo-German relations for the forthcoming number of the *Fortnightly*. He happened to be going back to Berlin, and I heard a little later that without seeing the article or ascertaining what was in it, he had claimed the credit with important people of having inspired it.

Much trouble followed. The thing got back to London and paragraphs appeared in English newspapers relating how a leading Liberal journalist had been nobbled by the Germans. This was unimportant, but worse followed in Berlin. My article contained several passages in which great liberties were taken with the All-Highest. Whatever might be said about other parts of the article, it was extremely inconvenient for my German friend to be supposed to have inspired this part of it. I heard what purported to be the real story some years later, and was told that the article, pasted on broad sheets of paper with the Kaiser's comments and exclamations in the margin, went backwards and forwards between Potsdam and the Foreign Office until all the officials were sick of it and cursed the day when I was born. When I went to Berlin in 1907 the thing was still simmering, and on my being introduced to von Holstein he immediately began on it, as will be related in another chapter.

This experience brought home to me the inordinate importance which was attached to the writings of English journalists by the German Foreign Office. Till then I had supposed that the part played by the newspapers in the strife between nations had been somewhat exaggerated, and that no great harm was done when the newspapers let off steam. But unfortunately to the German mind the newspaper article was only less important than the official despatch, and both were supposed to come from the same source. This made writing on foreign affairs extremely difficult, and the more so since the inspiration of the *Westminster* was thought to be plenary and direct. Another difficulty was that the newspapers of the two countries habitually wrote from their different angles, the insular and the continental, and were, therefore, very often at cross purposes. Most of us in London argued seriously on the merits of each question as it arose. We took great pains to get up the Morocco question and debated, for example, whether Casablanca should be a closed or an open port, or whether it should be policed by the French or by a mixed international force. But to the Germans these things were only counters in the much greater game of Continental "real-politics." They really cared nothing at all about Casablanca, but they did very much care that we should be backing the French, and they fought these points to drive a wedge between us and the French. Gradually it dawned upon the English journalist that the merits of these disputes were of scarcely any importance, and that, so far as he hoped to impress the Germans, he was wasting his breath in arguing them. In almost all cases they were acting solely *pour se faire valoir*, and their one test was whether the Entente was stronger or weaker in consequence.

V

The story of these years belongs to history and not to a personal record, but as a journalist I have some memories which may be worth setting down. At the end of 1905 and the beginning of 1906 we were plunged into electioneering, and for the time being forgot all about Morocco. I myself knew nothing of the critical conversations between Grey and Cambon during the month of January, and I am afraid was thinking much more about the Liberal triumph than the Algeciras Conference. In the course of the next few months I learnt—though not from Grey—that our military advisers were in touch with the French and that they had roughly agreed about their method of co-operation, if circumstances should compel them to act together. I took this as a matter of course, and was greatly surprised to learn a year or two later that certain Cabinet Ministers were unaware of it and regarded it as a dangerous and unauthorized departure. Since the Kaiser's visit to Tangier it had clearly been necessary to consider the hypothesis of joint military and naval action with the French, and it seemed contrary to common sense to suppose that we and they had not laid our heads together as to the measures we should take, if that emergency arose.

Here, perhaps, was the line between those who were instinctively pacifist and those of us who desired peace but saw, or thought we saw, the dangers that beset us in the world as it was. I never could attach much importance to the distinction made in the text of the Anglo-French Convention between diplomatic support and military support, or even to the condition, upon which we constantly insisted, that Parliament would have to be consulted before military support was given. In the world as it was, it seemed very unlikely that diplomatic support would be worth much unless we were prepared to back it with military support, and still more unlikely that Parliament would withhold its consent if a responsible Government came to it asking permission to give military support. In dealing with the French it was eminently right to lay down these conditions and to make clear to them that the Foreign Secretary and Cabinet were not autocrats, but had always to consider in advance whether the consent of Parliament would be forthcoming to a given course of action; but in considering the matter among ourselves it seemed to me wise to assume that certain kinds of diplomatic action would face us with the risk of war, and to make preparations accordingly.

Early in 1906 Haldane took me into his confidence about his plans for the reconstruction of the army, and I spent a great deal of my leisure this year and the next in following the different stages of his schemes and discovering military opinion about them. It was impossible to watch this process of incubation without constant reference to the political ideas from which it started. The basic idea was that, with the liabilities that we had undertaken from 1904 onwards, we could not be left to muddle through as in the South African War. Military reform was no longer in the air as in the days of Arnold-Forster and his predecessors; it was now hitched on to the definite hypothesis that we might have to intervene in a Continental war and was directed to making our intervention as effective as possible in the earlier stages of such a war and providing the means of rapid expansion in the later stages. Hence the perfectly equipped, immediately mobilizable Expeditionary Force, and the Territorial Army with its reserves behind it.

Here were the main lines of British policy embodied in military organization, and it seemed to me amazing in after years that eminent men who had been parties to this scheme should have spoken as if they knew nothing of them and had been shocked and surprised to discover that they were part of the policy of the Government. There was no concealment; the military correspondents and those of us who expounded the scheme in leading articles spoke quite frankly about its assumptions and the emergencies it was intended to meet. But it was very difficult in those days to get politicians to interest themselves in military matters. Liberals were shy of them as savouring of "militarism" and, being pledged to economy, were mainly concerned to see that Haldane did not spend too much money; Tories, who had done so much less when they were in office, now said that they wanted to do so much more, and went off on a wild-goose chase after compulsory service. Haldane's performance was really prodigious. He kept his generals within bounds, appeased the Liberals by giving them economies, convinced C. B. that he was a true Cardwellian, and yet produced his scheme intact. When he took the office which had been the grave of so many reputations, C. B. chuckled a little at the penance which had been inflicted on his old enemy of the Liberal League and wondered "what Schopenhauer would do among the generals." Schopenhauer did extraordinarily well among the generals, and, though the House of Commons was sometimes puzzled by the metaphysical language in which he expounded his scheme, within the War Office there was complete understanding.

Having watched this achievement through all its stages—on the whole the greatest administrative achievement within my knowledge—my blood boiled in after days when Haldane was bespattered with mud by an ignorant multitude; and it seemed specially intolerable that eminent men who must have known better should yield to and endorse the popular clamour. Haldane was not only not a "pro-German" in the sense that these people supposed, he was, if anything, a little too zealous in some of his schemes for meeting the German peril. He expounded his General Staff doctrine at times in language which seemed dangerously like fighting the Germans with their own weapons. And I am not sure that he kept a tight enough hand upon the "military conversations" with the French. If these were, as I think, a necessary part of the preparation for war in the circumstances of these times, they nevertheless needed to be conducted with the greatest discretion and kept strictly within the arcana of the War Office. But the soldiers were by no means always discreet, and some of them talked at large about British policy and gave it an anti-German edge which increased the mischief in Berlin. Others even criticized Haldane in lectures to students, and came out for compulsory service and full-blown militarism. All this went round the European whispering gallery and certainly lost nothing by repetition. Among my records I find a memorandum for Haldane in comment on one which he sent me:—

> In reflecting on the memorandum you showed me to-day, one or two things occur to me.
>
> As an instrument of war I suppose the German General Staff is everything that it is alleged to be, though I often hear that questioned, but as an instrument of policy, it is damnable. For years past it has imposed its policy on the German Government and Europe generally, and that policy has been roughly a manœuvring for positions in imaginary wars of its own invention. The Government has been the slave of the soldiers and it has done, or tried to do, that which they think strategically desirable, regardless of the political consequences. Of course, it is good that we should borrow from Germany any organization, training, or discipline which strengthens our military and naval position, *if* we can do so and yet avoid the evil German precedent in regard to policy. Some part of your memorandum seemed to me to come dangerously near encouraging soldiers and sailors to form a school of policy, and if you really succeeded in that, the Government would be powerless in their hands. With the Committee of Imperial Defence for their instrument they would override any Cabinet and unseat any Minister who opposed them.
>
> Our own experience during the last few years is, I think, enough to warn us of this danger. The Staff College has not been content to work out hypothetical campaigns, it has become a centre of policy, inspiring the idea of a conscript army (which would certainly be required, if its view of policy prevailed), and teaching all the clever young officers to look to a European campaign against Germany as their aim in life. The "military conversations" with the French have been conducted by men of this school and have certainly established the presumption in both camps, French and English, that this is the settled policy of Great Britain. Of course, when there is danger of war you must work out all the hypotheses, but when you do it in this atmosphere and have to take the French into

> your confidence, as you must in the case of joint operations, you run the danger of making a promise which the Government must redeem.
>
> Of course, it is most desirable that officers in the army and navy should be professionally competent within the limits of their profession, and that they should, in their personal capacity, be men of intelligence. But the idea of impregnating them with a doctrine which is called "the General Staff doctrine" seems to me full of peril and very likely to involve us in a desperate confusion between policy and strategy. These are first impressions, but I write them down, and I am sure you won't misunderstand.

I quote this, not to revive old controversies, but to show the extraordinary difficulty of making the necessary preparations without seeming to offer provocation. It certainly was necessary that there should be communications between the French War Office and our own, but to keep them secret proved all but impossible. Some military men conceived the hypothesis as a reality and were unable to conceal their partisanship. And yet to conceive it in this way was to make a warlike atmosphere, and to give the Germans a pretext for saying that we were the aggressors—which so far as the Government and the mass of the public were concerned was profoundly untrue.

I was immensely interested in the Territorial movement, and in 1908 gladly accepted the opportunity which Esher provided for me of becoming a member of the London County Association. I am still a member, and for many years sat on its General Purposes and Recruiting Committees. The thoroughness with which the Association set about its work, and the zealous and disinterested service of the Commanding Officers made a deep impression on me, and the country will some day, I hope, realize its debt to these pioneers in London and the country of what is now recognized to be the right method of organizing a second line army. But the Territorial movement had not long been under way before it came up against the compulsory service movement which was being led by Lord Roberts. Ian Hamilton, who was then, as always, one of the kindest and most intimate of my soldier friends, introduced me to Roberts, and my wife and I stayed with him and Lady Roberts at Ascot, and received much kindness from them then and afterwards. He was altogether delightful to talk to, and I think of him still as the shining example of youth in age. His spirit was unquenchable, and in his zeal for his cause he seemed to know nothing of bodily or mental fatigue. He came, I think, twice to our house in Sloane Street to argue it out, and I remember on one occasion suggesting that we should all join forces on an educational campaign to prolong the school age and make military training a part of the curriculum for the older lads. He seemed rather taken with this suggestion, but this was in the early days, when his thoughts were still concentrated on the idea of compulsory drill in schools. The movement soon got beyond this stage and, with the Camberley school of conscriptionists behind him, Roberts in a few months found himself not only advocating general compulsion, but running full tilt against Haldane's scheme for the Territorial Army, which was now regarded as blocking the road to the true solution.

At this time we were having an uphill fight to recruit up to our strength, and the appearance on the scene of an organized movement led by the most distinguished soldier of the day, declaring our effort to be futile, was a very serious blow. Some of us felt that it was necessary at once to organize a counter-movement, and we therefore formed a Voluntary Service Committee which met frequently, organized public meetings and distributed literature. In this we had the assistance of several distinguished soldiers, especially Ian Hamilton, who in spite of his long friendship with Lord Roberts came out manfully to declare his opinion that the voluntary principle was the right foundation for military service in this country. The argument we relied upon has been set out by Lord Grey in his "Twenty-five Years," and I still think it conclusive. There was no chance of getting public consent to conscription except by a proclamation of danger which in all probability would have provoked war before the change to a new system could have been effected; and there was imminent danger that in the hunt after this will-o'-the-wisp we should fail to get the practicable alternative of the Territorial Army. Young men who were being told that the Territorial Army was a farce and any form of voluntary service an injustice to the willing for the benefit of the unwilling, were very likely to conclude that it was a patriotic duty not to enlist.

Some of us endeavoured to induce Roberts and his friends to couple their agitation with advocacy of the Territorial Army. At least, we said, let them tell the young men to join up with the existing system, while the new one was being debated. No principle could be compromised by so doing, and it seemed obvious common sense. This, I think, was Roberts's own inclination, but the journalistic backers of compulsion, and especially Northcliffe, would have none of it. They argued that, if the Territorials succeeded, compulsion would be dead, and that in any case this hedging would be fatal to an effective campaign for conscription. There was, then, nothing to do but to meet them on their own ground, and in the years from 1909 onwards the battle went briskly on. We Territorials, and especially the Liberals and Radicals among us, often found ourselves between two fires. The Conscriptionists denounced us as unpatriotic, the Radicals thought us jingoes. The Haldane Territorial brand of "militarism" was said to be scarcely at all superior to the Roberts compulsory brand. Why would I keep on at it and bore my Liberal readers with these incessant outpourings about the squabble between the two unregenerates? The British fleet and the British regular army were sufficient for all probable emergencies without this Liberal-Imperialist fad of a Territorial Army. Scores of letters were to this effect, but seeing the Territorials from within and knowing their difficulties and the anxieties of their commanding officers, I was moved to keep at it. The controversy, I think, was useful. It parried what might have been a fatal blow to the Territorial Army and perhaps even, in the end, by the publicity that it gave, helped recruiting.

When at the end of the war a non-party Government, which was undisputed master of British policy, decided that compulsory military service must be abandoned at the earliest possible moment, it gave the measure of this agitation. There were a dozen good reasons why, having a great army which put us on a footing of equality with our neighbours, we should have retained it at least for a few months. I remember a conversation with Kitchener in which he shrewdly, if rather cynically, said that the gradual increase of the British army to its maximum would leave us in a position of great advantage for the Peace, and this unquestionably would have been the view of the old European statesmen. Nevertheless, the Government of 1918 judged it to be a sheer impossibility to maintain the compulsory principle for a month longer than the necessity justified. The feeling against it was said to be overwhelming, and so in fact it was. The British people have a full measure of the pugnacity of human kind, but it seems to be bred in their bones that they will not have compulsory militarism in times of peace. To accept this as a fact and to adjust policy to it is likely, for as long a time as can be foreseen, to be a necessity of British statesmanship. Nothing but war will mobilize the British people for war, and the idea of a military organization on the Continental model is a chimera of the military mind. Through all these years Roberts himself constantly disclaimed the imputation of desiring to impose Continental militarism on the country, and declared that he was seeking only for a roughly trained force for home defence. But a force of this kind would have been far less adapted to serious warfare than the Territorial Army, and the high military authorities who countenanced this agitation scarcely pretended to regard it as anything but the thin end of the wedge for a much larger design.

CHAPTER XVI

A VISIT TO GERMANY

The Anglo-German Quarrel—Efforts to Make Peace—Visits and Return Visits—A Banquet in Berlin—A Reassurance and Its Consequences—A Conversation with the Kaiser—"Why Don't They Come to Berlin?"—von Bethmann-Hollweg—A Visit to Prince Bülow—Meeting von Holstein—A Talk with Clemenceau—His View of the Entente.

I

THE Great War is one of those events which, as Oliver Wendell Holmes says, blot backwards in the book of history, and it is difficult not to think of the years that preceded it as stained with the coming calamity.

Actually the moods of all of us changed about the German peril as about everything else. There were moments when it seemed very near, and then months and even years in which it seemed to be receding. Grey in his "Twenty-five Years" has enumerated the four crises, Algeciras (1906–7), Bosnia-Herzegovina (1908–9), Agadir (1911), the Balkan War (1912–13), which preceded the final catastrophe. As we look back on them these events seem to be in a culminating sequence, and the historian does right to think of them as related. They were thus related in the minds of Governments and Foreign Secretaries, but to most of us who lived through them, only one seemed to be a crisis which brought war actually to our doors. That was Agadir, and from the time of Lloyd George's Mansion House speech in the third week of July, 1911, up to the beginning of October, no reasonably well-informed journalist could have thought the peace secure for a month ahead. The Algeciras Conference, though it raised very difficult and even dangerous questions, was in outward appearance rather a *détente* from a previous period of tension than a crisis in itself. In the Balkan affairs the British-German issue was only indirect, and few of us really apprehended the grinding logic of the Alliance system which would presently range the Powers into hostile camps on a question mainly affecting Austria. It would be a complete mistake to suppose that we regarded all these events as phases in the Anglo-German quarrel. We were often irritated with France, and sometimes quite as angry with Russia as with Germany. "To hell with Serbia" was quite a common sentiment in what would be called jingo circles.

There was, at all events, no sense of a coming doom necessarily and inevitably closing in upon us. What weighed with the Liberal journalist as the one constant and sinister factor was the German fleet policy, and so long as that persisted I could see no way of escape from perpetually rising naval estimates on our side. I was for "two keels to one," or for any scheme of building which the Naval Lords thought necessary after careful examination of the German plans. My hope was that we should gradually wear down the Germans by showing them that we could not be out-built, and that we should then get back to tolerable relations. But precisely because this was my hope, it seemed to me pure mischief to add an incessant recrimination to the inevitable trouble caused by the naval rivalry. Undoubtedly we had to out-build the Germans, but let us do it quietly—"show our teeth, but hold our tongues." Just in proportion as there was a danger of war it was important to avoid any language that might inflame the quarrel.

Indeed, a little more than this—important also to seize any opportunity to restore a friendly spirit between the two peoples. When the Algeciras Conference was over, such an opportunity seemed to offer, and I joined heartily in the reception given to the German editors who came to London in 1906, and spoke at the principal dinner given to them. The following year the Germans issued an invitation to English editors for a return visit to Germany, and newspapers of all parties joined in accepting it. The party included W. T. Stead, Sidney Low, Lucien Wolf, J. S. R. Phillips of the *Yorkshire Post*, and A. G. Gardiner of the *Daily News*, a warm friend in after years whom I first got to know on this tour. I went for the *Westminster*, and was asked by my brother editors to speak for them at the principal banquet at Berlin. The affair was arranged on a scale which shamed the English hosts of the previous year. There were municipal receptions and banquets in all the principal cities; the hospitality was unbounded, and the welcome given to us uproarious. It was beautiful June weather, and before our junketings at night we were out all day seeing the countryside in blossom-time as well as the famous show places and public buildings in the towns. I had been in Germany several times before, but seeing it in this panoramic way was to be powerfully impressed with its prosperity, its burnished cleanliness and the unceasing activity of its municipalities.

My own business was chiefly in Berlin. Count Benckendorff, the Russian Ambassador in London, had told his brother-in-law, Prince Hatzfeldt, of my coming, and the Prince was at the station to meet me and took me away with him in his car. He was a kindly and very honest man, and I had much frank and interesting talk with him. He opened the door for me to other people whom I wished to see, and I was consequently much engaged in the intervals of our fixed programme. The banquet in the great hall of the Zoological Gardens was the most formidable occasion of the kind I ever had to face. The enormous room was elaborately decorated, and we were told that the All-Highest himself had taken a personal interest in this part of the entertainment. It was a daring and original scheme, but one part of it filled me with apprehension. Along three sides of it was what seemed to be a tall and continuous yew hedge, and I thought with despair of having to project my voice over the multitude of diners into that soft thicket. Then the company astonished me. We had expected a gathering mainly of journalists and literary folk with perhaps one Minister. But a few seats from me sat von Tirpitz—the burly figure with the immense tawny beard—and next to him Lascelles, the British Ambassador, and with them a score of Ministers, officials and soldiers, all in uniform, in addition to a great company which, we were told, included many of the most distinguished journalists and men of letters and even dramatists and artists in Germany. We had done nothing like it in London, and the homely discourse which I had prepared for a gathering of brother journalists suddenly seemed very unsuitable.

At a German public dinner the speeches are not reserved to the end, but made between the courses, starting at the very beginning—which means that they have to be arranged according to the convenience of the cook. I had been instructed to speak for half an hour, but was told that I should have to wait until the cook intimated that this interval was possible without spoiling the dinner. Twice I was warned and twice the warning was revoked, and then the signal came suddenly when my miserable thoughts seemed to have been scattered to the winds. Of course, I was prepared, and since I was speaking in English I had taken the precaution of getting the speech printed and translated for the German reporters. But I am quite incapable of learning a half-hour's speech and reciting it by note and I should have been deeply ashamed to produce a manuscript and read from it as, by the way, all the German speakers did. Moreover, I had to answer on the spur of the moment a speech made by the Under-Secretary for Foreign Affairs, which covered quite different ground from my prepared speech.

Somehow or other I got through it without catastrophe and my colleagues were kind enough to say that I had not disgraced them. The greater part of what I said is of no consequence. It was simply a plea addressed to journalists to stop wrangling and try to understand each other's points of view. But one passage had some little importance, at least to me personally. I had understood the Under-Secretary of State to say—or at least mean—that the worst of the naval competition was now over and that we might look forward to a period in which our relations would not be complicated by this cause of friction. This, said in the presence of von Tirpitz, seemed to me of real importance, and I made what I thought to be suitable acknowledgment of it. As this part of my speech was impromptu I do not think it was reported, but what I supposed the Under-Secretary to have said remained in my mind as the one solid residuum in this feast of rhetoric.

I may have misunderstood the Under-Secretary, and can only speak of my impression. But the impression was confirmed in private conversations, and all our German friends seemed to say—what I understood him to have said—that we were nearing the end of the naval competition. I am sure even now that most of them believed it, for it would have been folly to give an English journalist an assurance which events to their knowledge would in a few months prove to be false. Yet this is in effect what happened, for when the new Naval Law of April, 1908, appeared, largely accelerating the German programme, I felt that I had been misled, and that no further assurances from the Germans about shipbuilding were worth anything. So I told McKenna in that year; and in the following year, 1909, I was breast high for his Dreadnought programme. So far as I was concerned, this was the net result of our visit to Germany in 1907, and I record it as a warning to official people, when they are tempted to conciliate journalists without being sure of their ground.

II

Our visit to Berlin did not end with this banquet. The next day we were invited to Potsdam as the guests of the Emperor. It was his birthday, and the first part of our entertainment was to witness the birthday parade of the Prussian Guards, which was then thought to be the finest military display in Europe. It certainly was an astonishing affair, but the eighteenth-century uniforms and the goose-step gave it the air of an operatic performance rather than of an exercise in real soldiering. I remember, however, being pleasantly impressed with the quite simple and friendly relations which seemed to exist between the Emperor and the troops. He said, "Morgen, leute," as they passed the saluting point, and they roared a cheerful, "Morgen, Majestät," in reply. The review over, we were taken to lunch in the Orangery at Potsdam, while the Emperor went off to lunch at the officers' mess of the Prussian Guard. Presently we were told that he was coming to inspect us, and were asked to range up outside the Orangery. He came riding at the head of his staff on an enormous horse, in the full splendour of his white uniform and helmet with the famous eagle on it. I was called up first and stood by the horse, with my forehead on the level of the stirrup, feeling sadly at a disadvantage and hoping and expecting to be dismissed with the conventional civilities.

But an astonishing conversation followed. The Emperor seemed to assume that I was in Germany for the first time—which was far from being the case—and asked me how I liked it and what sort of impression it had made upon me. I answered truly that all our impressions had been most agreeable and that we should never forget the hospitality we had received. Then I added that we had been specially impressed by the work of the German municipalities. "Is that really so?" he said sharply. "I thought you English despised us." I hastily assured him that that was a mistake, and said that on the contrary we paid very sincere homage to German energy, German organization, German science, etc., and were at much pains to imitate German examples. He was not appeased. "If that is so," he retorted, "why don't you English come to Germany?" I said that a very large number did come to Germany and that we ourselves had met many of our own countrymen in our ten days' travels. "But they don't come to Berlin," he persisted. "Why don't they come to Berlin?" I felt the waters closing round me and answered feebly that a good many did come to Berlin. "Who comes?" was the next question. "Tell me, who comes?" I clutched at the names of more or less distinguished men who, I knew, had visited Berlin in recent years. I tried a blameless politician, recently Secretary for War, but he was declared to be a "not very important man"; I tried Winston Churchill, and the answer was that he was a very young man. Then finally I tried Haldane, and he was admitted to be a very distinguished man, and I seemed for a moment to be in safety. But the Emperor was still unappeased. "They don't come," he repeated. "Go back and tell them to come; tell your Government people to come; tell Sir Edward Grey to come." There was a pause, which I took to be the sign for my dismissal, and I retired somewhat hastily. It was conveyed to me on my return to England that his conversation was far from ended, and that I had committed a breach of etiquette in going away before the All-Highest dismissed me. But my colleagues were waiting their turn, and I seemed to have been an interminable time at the horse's stirrup. A few minutes later, the genial editor of the *Yorkshire Post* was sending the Emperor into shouts of laughter with Yorkshire stories and reminiscences of Lord Lonsdale. He, and not I, had the honours of this occasion.

The impression made on me was that this Emperor on the high horse was clearly a very human kind of human being. He evidently had a grievance, and he spoke of it with complete candour, regardless of the conventions and solemnities. It was just as if a newcomer was complaining that the county didn't call on him. This probably explained more than we knew at the time. It was incredible to us that the great German Empire, by far the strongest thing in Europe, thought itself slighted and side-tracked. But so it did. It was always conscious that, as an Empire, it was a new thing in the world, and imagining that it was being slighted by the old aristocracy. Hence its demands for "a place in the sun," and its perpetual complaint that questions were being settled over its head. The other nations took their status for granted; Germany was always asserting hers. The Emperor evidently thought that the scarcity of English visiting Berlin was a deliberate affront.

I duly conveyed the Kaiser's message to Sir Edward Grey, but he very naturally observed that it was an unusual thing for Foreign Secretaries to go visiting Emperors in foreign capitals, and that he thought it better to devote himself to his duties at home. The Emperor, I believe, was very persistent in this matter, and to the end was in the habit of complaining that his invitations had been ignored. So far as Grey was concerned, all the other European sovereigns might have made the same complaint. The only foreign visit he paid was in the spring of 1914, when he accompanied the King to Paris.

I saw the Kaiser twice again, once at an afternoon reception at the German Embassy in London, when he discoursed about journalism and enlarged on the great superiority of English illustrated papers to all others; and, finally, at the famous luncheon at Haldane's house, May 18th, 1911. On that occasion I was sitting near enough to hear the conversation about theologians which Lord Morley has recorded in his "Recollections." I can still see Morley's eyebrows going skyward when the Kaiser declared Bishop Boyd Carpenter to be the greatest living theologian, and remember Morley's answer, "But, sir, isn't there one Harnack?" The Kaiser handsomely awarded Harnack the second place, and said he had greatly come on since he had brought him to Berlin. Another little incident comes back to me from this occasion. Admiral Sir Arthur Wilson, who was thought to be the living embodiment of the strong, silent Fleet Commander, innocent of all courtly accomplishments, was there, and after lunch the Kaiser brought up and introduced to him an elderly German Admiral, who was a member of the Imperial suite. "Admiral Müller," said the Emperor, with rather heavy pleasantry, "is old enough to have fought at the Battle of Trafalgar." "In that case, sir," said Wilson, "I must have fought at the Battle of the Nile." Presently I had my five minutes with the Emperor, but this time he only gave me his views on the prehistoric paintings in the caves of the Dordogne.

The day after our banquet in Berlin, we dined in private to meet von Bethmann-Hollweg. He was then Minister of the Interior and no one dreamt of him as a future Chancellor. He seemed to me the best type of German official, quiet, benevolent and modest, full of facts and figures about his own Department and ready with precise answers to all questions about it. My talk with him was almost wholly about German social policy, especially sickness and accident insurance, about which we were then looking to Germany for guidance, and I cannot recall anything that he said about foreign affairs. But the impression he made upon me that evening remained long afterwards, and I never could think of him except as an honest man tangled in circumstances to which he was tragically unfitted.

III

I was obliged to return to London when my colleagues went on to South Germany, and I had intended to leave on the morning of Saturday, June 1st. But on the Thursday evening I received an intimation that, if I would stay a day longer, the Chancellor, Prince Bülow, would see me on the Saturday afternoon. Naturally I stayed, and I can hardly do better than print the record which I made at the time of our interview that afternoon:

The white imperial cars were outside the Chancellor's residence when I arrived at the appointed time (4.30 in the afternoon), and I was told that the Emperor was with the Chancellor and that I must wait a little. The literature provided in the waiting-room consisted, I noticed, of bound volumes of Punch cartoons and nothing else. After a quarter of an hour I heard the Emperor go, and the Prince came in himself and brought me into his room—a long handsome room with three windows overlooking the garden. He began at once by saying that he had been talking to the Emperor about the relations of England and Germany and that the Emperor had said, and wished him to repeat most emphatically, that there was not a man in Germany "from the Kaiser down to the man in the street" who had the faintest idea of attacking England or wished mischief to her. He and the Emperor agreed that the difficulties between the two countries were wholly and solely due to misunderstandings, and that there was nothing of material importance at issue between them. Misunderstandings, however, were greatly to be deprecated and ought to be cured, for otherwise they might lead to inconvenient consequences. The trouble between England and Germany during the last two years was as if some mischievous person had deposited a shell (*Granate*) in your garden. If you let it alone it would do no harm and in time would die, but if you kicked it about, it might easily become dangerous. Happily the shell was dying, and he hoped in future it would be let alone.

He went on to ask many questions about Sir Edward Grey and Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman, the probable life of the Government and the difficulties with the House of Lords. He spoke in high terms of Sir Edward Grey, said he had heard he was a most high-minded, disinterested man, and asked me how I should describe his character. I answered that Grey had a mind of transparent clearness and genuine simplicity, and that he was a man without an *arrière pensée* who should always be taken as meaning what he said and saying what he meant. The Prince replied that this was a most enviable reputation and that he could imagine nothing more helpful to a Foreign Secretary. Then about Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman. Was it not very unusual that a man should develop such talent and come to such a remarkable position so late in life? I said that Sir Henry was still comparatively young for English politics, that Mr. Gladstone had formed his fourth Government when he was 83, and that I had heard him make one of his best speeches when he was nearly 85. To which the Prince answered, "Incredible." Next he wanted to know how long the Government would last and what would happen about the House of Lords. I said I expected the Government to last nearly three years longer and that the House of Lords would probably be careful about repeating its challenge unless opinion turned decisively against the

Government. The Prince said it was wonderful how British institutions were worked by opinion. England was the only country in which Parliamentarism had really been a success. It amazed him to see how enduring our two-party system was in spite of all divisions of opinion. The Unionist party, it was true, was a coalition in name, but a coalition for all purposes which was practically the same thing as a solid party. How different from the *bloc* with which he had to govern in the Reichstag and which, if pieced together for one purpose, was always liable to fall apart for the next. Government ought to be very easy for English statesmen. None of them knew the difficulties which foreign statesmen had to contend with, and there was not sufficient allowance made for them in England.

The Prince then passed to the internal question of Germany, and said there was one misunderstanding which was very prevalent in England, and the cause of considerable mischief. This was that the German population was bursting its bounds and seeking other territory to expand in. The very contrary was the truth. Germany had not enough population for her territory, and was actually at this moment unable to obtain enough labour and trying to import it. Economically it would be very good for Germany if she could import some of the Chinese who had given us so much trouble in the Transvaal. At all events the idea that Germany needed outlets for her population was an entire delusion.

The Prince then asked me about the material condition of Great Britain, and I replied that at the present moment we were doing an enormous trade—as big a trade as we could handle—but that it was accompanied by a depression in the "City" which caused great grumbling in London. People wanted all their money for industry and had none left for speculation. "How very interesting," he replied, "for that is exactly our condition in Germany. We are doing too big a trade, and here also there is great depression in what you would call the 'City' in Berlin. I shall be glad to tell the grumblers what you say about England."

The Prince then talked about Socialism, and said it was very lucky for us that our Radical and Labour parties were not Socialist parties. I said that Socialism was an influence rather than a party as yet in England, and that, though they complained of their Socialists in Germany, our Socialists would think they had done extremely well if they could get anything like as much Socialism in England as was daily practised by the German Imperial Government and the German municipal councils. He laughed at this and said that our Socialists must be very mild.

The Prince then said, "Come along, I must introduce you to von Holstein." This surprised me, for I supposed von Holstein to be hopelessly out of favour since he had been dismissed from the Foreign Office, and all Berlin was saying that he was plotting a malignant kind of revenge against both Bülow and the Emperor. Von Holstein, who was in the next room—a stout, elderly man of rather forbidding appearance—spoke perfect English without a trace of German accent and even, I thought, with a slight Lancashire accent. From his voice one could not have told that he was not an Englishman. The Prince introduced me as "the editor of one of the friendly papers," which von Holstein immediately corrected by saying, "Pardon me, Prince, one of the relatively friendly papers." He seemed beside himself with anger, and was about to display an intimate knowledge of a certain article I had written on the Morocco question nearly two years previously, when the Prince turned the conversation on to English books and literature. Von Holstein then recovered his temper, and quoted Kipling with much admiration. Then, as he seemed to be getting back to Morocco, the Prince said he really must go and dress, as he was dining with the Emperor before the Opera. I took my leave, the Prince saying "he would do everything for me if I would come again to Berlin."

Those who have read the second edition of Prince Bülow's "Imperial Germany" and recall the account he gives there of his diplomatic methods during the period he calls the "danger zone," may judge for themselves of what lay behind his assurances and the Emperor's. For myself, I was very anxious to think them sincere, but I judged by the sequel, and after the Navy Law of April, 1908, it became impossible to take them at their face value.

My report that I had seen von Holstein at the Chancellor's house was received with incredulity, when I got back to London. Metternich said bluntly that it was impossible, and said so the more emphatically when I added that the Emperor had been under the same roof that afternoon. Benckendorff was sceptical, and said I must have been mistaken. Again and again during the next few weeks I was asked if I was quite sure. There was no doubt about it, but Bülow was supposed never to do things of this kind without a motive, and what he meant by revealing to an English visitor that Holstein was under his roof at that moment became a subject of the liveliest conjecture in the diplomatic circle. The reader who is curious on the subject may learn what was on foot if he will turn to the sixth chapter of Emil Ludwig's "Kaiser Wilhelm II," and I need not enter into it.

IV

Though it belongs to an earlier date, let me conclude this chapter by adding a note, also made at the time, of an interview I had with M. Clemenceau in Paris, on January 21st of the same year, 1907. M. Clemenceau spoke in French, but I think my translation fairly conveys his meaning :—

> Clemenceau gave me a brief summary of the situation as it appeared to him. There are, he said, many illusions.
>
> England has illusions about a rapprochement with Germany.
>
> Germany has illusions about a rapprochement with France.
>
> France will never have an entente with Germany.
>
> Germany will never have an entente with England.
>
> Yet England must not suppose (another illusion) that France can let her German policy pass into English hands. It must not be taken for granted that she could go to war for an Anglo-German quarrel. She has liabilities which England has not, and must be mistress of her own policy in that respect.
>
> The best to be hoped for was a sort of *équilibre,* normal but not intimate relations between England and Germany; intimate relations between France and England. The entente, however, would have to be developed; for though successful politically, it had still to bear fruit economically. He suggested a variety of things—a much improved Channel service, commercial conferences, visits of municipalities, etc., etc. The Channel Tunnel was "too delicate" for Frenchmen to propose or discuss.
>
> I said that though Germans and English might dislike each other, there were no positive questions which could drive them to war. He was inclined to treat that as another illusion. He wished it was true, for it would be more convenient to France if there were not such questions, but hardly a month passed without some controversy arising which might easily boil up into a quarrel. As between France and Germany, questions often arose about which the Germans were so uncivil that there was nothing to do but suspend correspondence, and we who had not their experience nor their motives for keeping the peace might be less patient. Grey had made considerable progress thus far in negotiating with Russia and seemed to have done admirably, but he predicted that Germany would step in and do her utmost to prevent a settlement.

These records seem to me very fairly to sum up the situation between us, the French and the Germans about midway in the history of the Entente. We were not willing to trust our policy to the French, and the French were not willing to trust their policy to us. The French thought it as impossible for us as for them to have friendship with Germany, but they considered an *équilibre* in which we should have intimate relations with themselves and civil relations with Germany, still a possibility and wished us to do nothing hastily to disturb it. My memories are decisive against the theory that France wanted or was plotting a war of revenge in these years.

CHAPTER XVII

AN EVENTFUL YEAR

The Asquith Government—Elgin and Tweedmouth—Spring-Rice's Warnings—A Talk with Isvolsky—The Question of the Straits—A Minister in Difficulties—A Glance through the Files—The Limitations of the Journalist.

I

THE year 1908 was full of political events—the death of C. B., the succession of Asquith, the Bosnia-Herzegovina crisis and other foreign happenings, but it has no "secret history" so far as I am aware. C. B.'s long illness made serious difficulties; King Edward, not realizing that he was dying, had made him promise to defer his resignation until his return from Biarritz, and C. B.'s colleagues, who had the most sincere affection for him, were anxious that he should not be told that he was beyond recovery. For many weeks Government had to be carried on between the sick room and the Cabinet, and was at times almost brought to a standstill.

The displacement of Elgin and Tweedmouth, the one from the Government and the other from the Admiralty, were the only incidents in the re-forming of the Government under Asquith. Elgin, I am sure, must have been an able man, and he was certainly a dutiful one, but no one ever made on one quite the same impression of complete passivity. I remember at a certain dinner defying Birrell, who was sitting next to him, to make him smile, and I cannot better describe this quality of Elgin's than by saying that Birrell completely failed.* I was told that he never opened his mouth in Cabinet except to make the briefest and most necessary explanations, and nothing would induce him to speak on any subject outside his Department. Though he had his distinguished place as an ex-Viceroy, he had not been known as either a politician or a Liberal until he appeared on the Liberal platform shortly before the downfall of Balfour's Government, and C. B.'s insistence on giving him high office when there were so many other claimants had been regarded as one of those mysterious things that lie between Scotsmen and are inexplicable to other people. I rather think that, remembering the staunch support he had had from Liberal peers in former times of trouble, C. B. wished to be well fortified in the House of Lords. But this lay between the two men, and when C. B. went, Elgin had the mortification—or what would have been the mortification to any other man—of seeing the appointment of his successor leak into the newspapers before he was aware that he was to be superseded. He departed with perfect dignity and silence, and his habitual calm did not appear to be ruffled.

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* He tried the story of the young entomologist who, having searched a publisher's catalogue for a book on moths, went to a bookseller and asked for "Bull's Hints to Young Mothers."

Tweedmouth's fumbling explanation of an extraordinary letter the Kaiser had written to him about the British and German navies, and his unhandy speeches in the House of Lords were so unlike his cheerful and adroit self that one suspected that he was an ill man. He *was* very ill, and letters that he wrote to me during these weeks made me fear the worst. It was sad to see him so incapacitated, sad especially to those who, like myself, had seen him at work in the days when he was counted a prince among whips and party managers. He was not a clever man, but he was extraordinarily shrewd and wise in his estimate of men and political situations, and he had in the political sense a quite remarkable tact. For geniality and kindness and constant help from my earliest days in journalism I was greatly in his debt, and his wife had been the kindest of friends to my wife and myself since our marriage. He was very loth to quit the Admiralty, and pleasure at the promotion of the old and intimate friend, Reginald McKenna, who took his place, was a little dashed by his evident disappointment and sense of grievance, when he was asked to take the Presidency of the Council instead. It was an honourable retreat, but he felt it to be a retreat, and it greatly depressed his mind and spirits.

This was a bad year in foreign affairs. The conclusion of the Anglo-Russian agreement had increased the ill-will in Germany, and the talk of the "encircling policy of King Edward" was louder than ever. In April came the new German Navy Law with an acceleration of ship-building, which faced us with a new naval problem, and in the autumn the revolution of the Young Turks was followed swiftly by the Austrian annexation of Bosnia-Herzegovina and the Bulgarian declaration of independence. Then the luckless interview with the Kaiser, published in the *Daily Telegraph* at the end of October, set both peoples by the ears and produced a Kaiser crisis in Germany. I don't know what genius composed this interview—the Kaiser seemed to say that he did not—but whoever he was, he contrived to cram into a short space the maximum quantity of irritation to both Germans and British.* With all this material to work on, the Anglo-German Press campaign went merrily on, and in its efforts to pour oil on troubled waters, the *Westminster* was in constant scrapes with both British and German patriots.

I received many long and careful letters about this time from Cecil Spring-Rice, afterwards Ambassador in the United States, who was then First Secretary at St. Petersburg, and in return I tried to keep him informed about the currents of opinion at home. He was a keen and shrewd observer and constantly insisted on the importance, which we were very much inclined to overlook, of the duel which was going on between Russia and Germany. Benckendorff had a little dashed my satisfaction at the Anglo-Russian Convention of 1907 by saying, in a phrase which I long remembered, that there was "nothing that Russia could do with us or for us that would be worth the cost to her of a rupture with Germany." Spring-Rice was full of warning that Germany was actively at work to bring the Anglo-Russian agreement to nought, and that there was a strong party in Russia which was professedly pro-German and would play into the hands of the Germans, whenever opportunity offered. This party persisted, and was a perpetual source of anxiety during the

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* The Kaiser inveighed against the Anglo-Japanese Alliance, and declared that "Germany must be prepared for any eventualities in the East"; he also reproached the English people with having misunderstood and misjudged him, and claimed to have stood by them at considerable risk to his popularity with his own people.

Great War, but it was temporarily extinguished in the autumn of this year when the Austrians annexed Bosnia-Herzegovina and the Germans came "in shining armour" to their support.

II

Isvolsky, the Russian Foreign Secretary, came to London in the second week of October, and at Benckendorff's invitation I went to the Russian Embassy and had an hour with him. There are some people who instinctively put you on your guard, and he was one of them. He was a large suave man of excessively diplomatic manners who, with great affability, gave one the air of having something up his sleeve. He walked all round the Bosnia-Herzegovina situation and then suddenly asked me what the British public would say if the Straits were opened and the Russian fleet permitted to come into the Mediterranean. Would not such an accession of naval power to the Entente outweigh old prejudices and be considered of mutual advantage to all parties? I was quite unprepared for the question, for I had not till then connected it with the Bosnia-Herzegovina crisis, which I understood was to be the subject of our conversation. I replied on the spur of the moment that since he spoke of mutual advantage, I supposed that he meant that the door of the Straits should open inwards as well as outwards—that the British fleet, for example, should be permitted to go into the Black Sea as well as the Russian fleet come out into the Mediterranean—and that as a journalist putting the thing to the newspaper reader I should certainly feel a great deal easier if this were understood. At this he immediately began to draw back and said that, though it might seem superficially right and fair, it was not so in reality; that there was a great difference between the Russian fleet coming out and other fleets going in, and that in any case it would have to be very carefully considered, and I must not be premature. To which I replied that as a journalist I thought it would be far better not to launch the idea until this aspect of it had been carefully considered and the decision arrived at could be plainly stated together with the reasons for it.

Germany and Italy were at enormous pains to prove that they knew nothing of the Austrian coup, and sometimes rather ludicrously overshot the mark in their disclaimers. One day about this time I received a sudden summons from the Italian Ambassador. He apologized for asking me to come at such short notice, and said that he wanted my advice as a journalist about a tiresome emergency which had just arisen. His chief, the Italian Foreign Secretary, had happened to be addressing his constituents, who were a simple rustic people, a day or two after the annexation of Bosnia-Herzegovina, and he had said that he had been aware that it was about to take place. This, said the Ambassador, had caused some awkwardness, since it was in apparent, though not real, conflict with the assurances of the Italian Government that it knew nothing. The truth was that the Foreign Secretary had actually known nothing,* but that since it would have been damaging to him in the eyes of these humble people to have been supposed ignorant of so important an event, he had "in an access of excusable *amour propre*," and in the supposed absence of reporters, represented himself as having had knowledge which he did not in fact possess. Unfortunately, reporters *were* present, and this passage in his speech had been telegraphed abroad and published all over Europe. Could I explain these circumstances in a discreet way which would not be compromising to the Italian Foreign Secretary or hurt his feelings?

I remember replying that, though on various occasions I had tried to perform modest services for great people who had found themselves in difficulties, the case as presented to me was beyond my resources. I said I would think it over and see what could be done, but that my first impression was that in such singular circumstances the least said the soonest mended. I have sometimes amused myself in later years in trying to construct a paragraph which would have met the Ambassador's requirements, but have always retired baffled. It would still make an interesting problem for an examination paper in the higher journalism.

San Giuliano was a clever man with a quiet sense of humour, and I do not suppose for a moment that he intended me to make any public statement on this matter. What he did probably intend was that I should cease lifting my eyebrows in the *Westminster* at the supposed connivance of Italy at a transaction which on the face of it was so little to her interest, and possibly, also, that I should convey to the Foreign Office an explanation which it would not be convenient for him to make officially.

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* This, I think, is somewhat in doubt, judging from the subsequent disclosures.

All these events deepened one's uneasiness about the game which was being played in Europe. The objects and intentions of the various parties seemed past finding out. It seemed impossible that the Austrian coup should have been risked without the foreknowledge of Germany, but it was not only Germany which seemed to be shuffling. I got the impression that Isvolsky also knew more about it than he acknowledged, and that a Russo-Austrian deal at the expense of the other Powers might have been part of the original scheme.* If so, Isvolsky paid dearly for his indiscretion; and his withdrawal before German threats in the following year was, as is shown by the documents published since the war, an abject and painful collapse. The German Emperor's boast in the following year that he had come to the rescue of Austria in "shining armour" was construed in this country as a sensational act of adhesion to Austrian policy, but European diplomatists who knew the ways of these Empires better than Englishmen did, took it in quite a different sense and interpreted it as a brusque reminder to Austria that she could not stand on her own legs, and that whatever success she had had was due to German support.

III

A glance through the files of the *Westminster* for certain months of the year 1908 may help to illustrate the state of opinion as well as the work of an editor in one of the most critical years before the war. Looking at the files, I see first the Anglo-German quarrel coming to one of its periodical boiling points as the result of the new German Navy Law. The *Westminster* keeps saying, "Build more ships, but keep quiet about it. We shall have to build and we shall have to pay, but we needn't add to the mischief by an incessant wrangle." On August 15th I made a daring suggestion which got me into much trouble. "Rather than go on with this incessant quarrelling, let us lay down a programme for four years and, if necessary, raise a loan to finance it. That will show the Germans that we are not to be out-built and give us peace on the eternal subject for at least that period." Two days later it was reported simultaneously in a number of German newspapers that Lloyd George had said in private conversation that, Liberal and economist though he was, he would, like Cobden, be prepared to raise a hundred million loan rather than see British naval power in jeopardy. Ingenious people put two and two together, and it was announced in many English newspapers and all over Germany that Lloyd George was in consultation with certain financiers about the launching of this loan and that he had arranged with me to make a cautious communication to the public on that subject. Loud protests rose from financial purists at home, and there was great sensation in Germany. On the following Saturday I found it necessary to state that I knew nothing of Lloyd George's views and had had no communication with him, but I stuck to my guns, while explaining that the loan I contemplated was merely the mechanical means of financing a four years' programme, and that what I attached importance to was being rid of the controversy for this period.

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* Isvolsky gave different accounts of the matter at different times, but it seems clear that at a meeting between him and Aehrenthal, the Austrian Foreign Secretary, at Buchlau, on September 15th, the two men provisionally agreed on a scheme by which Austria-Hungary was to annex Bosnia-Herzegovina, and Russia simultaneously to procure the opening of the Straits. Three weeks later Aehrenthal jumped his part of the scheme before Isvolsky had made any progress with his part.

If I remember rightly, this suggestion grew out of a talk with Metternich. I had reproached him about the new German Navy Bill and said that the Navy maniacs in Germany were making an impossible situation for those of us who wished to compose the German quarrel. I added, "If you go on like this, we shall some day launch a big loan and build on a scale which will show you once for all that we are not to be outpaced," or words to that effect. His reply was, "Why not? We are within our rights in building, you would be within your rights in making any reply you choose, and it might even clear up the situation and put us on a better footing." I do not wish to saddle Metternich with having made this suggestion, but his reply set me thinking, and I am by no means sure even now that it would not have been a wise move.

For all these months we were living in a mist of generous illusion about the Young Turks and their Revolution. Grey himself said in the House of Commons that the Macedonian murder bands had miraculously faded away and that a problem which had baffled the Powers was now solving itself. The *Westminster*, like most London papers, was loud in praise of the Turkish reformers and, when things began to go a little awry, pleaded for patience and charitable allowance in criticism. Some of their emissaries came to London and visited the *Westminster* office, and there were many earnest conversations about the new Constitution and some pleasant fraternizing. Our hopes of the new régime in Turkey made the Austrian coup seem peculiarly cruel and inopportune, and from October 5th onwards the *Westminster* was enlarging both on that aspect of it and on the crushing blow that it delivered to treaty law in Europe. Between October 11th and 17th I trace the results of my interview with Isvolsky and of what I had ascertained as to the Foreign Office view on the question of the Straits. Grey strongly objected to the aggrieved Powers taking compensation at the expense of Turkey, who was most aggrieved, and told Isvolsky that, though we would not block the way if he obtained the consent of the Turks, we regarded their consent as essential. To this I added that our attitude would also finally depend on "the particular conditions and the degree of reciprocity proposed."

Then cutting across all this came the Kaiser's interview, which I subjected to a somewhat scathing analysis, winding up with an expression of wonder whether it would cause more trouble in England or in Germany. I said that the Emperor put us in an impossible position. If we did not acknowledge what he evidently intended to be a friendly gesture, we should seem to be churlish; if we expressed our gratitude, we should seem to be accepting his theory that he was fighting our battles in the midst of a hostile people. There was great uproar in both countries, and for the next fortnight the Kaiser crisis and the debates in the Reichstag made the business of peace-making laborious and uncomfortable. In the meantime the Morocco question cropped up again, and in the first week of November there was stormy talk between French and Germans about a scrimmage at Casablanca, the Germans even going to the length of demanding an apology. For a few days sabres rattled over this, and some newspapers talked of a serious crisis. Rightly or wrongly, the *Westminster* judged the affair as an attempted diversion by Prince Bülow in the very serious domestic crisis in which he was now involved. But this, too, blew over and after ten days' clatter both Governments agreed to have recourse to the Hague Tribunal.

The capacity for sensation on foreign affairs is limited, and, being now overlaid by layers of new crises, the Bosnia-Herzegovina affair faded out of sight, and the eternal domestic questions of education and licensing occupied the front page. The public, never greatly to be excited about Balkan affairs, could not sustain its interest in either the wickedness of Austria or the grievances of Russians, Turks and Serbs for more than a few weeks. It had no idea of the very serious and sometimes dangerous questions which were being debated behind the scenes at the end of the year and well on into the New Year. I had opportunities of following these, and find myself from time to time issuing warnings of their serious nature. But the intricate questions of "compensation" which arose between Austrians, Serbians and Turks were not good material for the journalist, and public attention was worn out. Perhaps it was better so, for the diplomatists were able to do their work without any Press chorus.

IV

In writing about foreign affairs in these times one was perpetually reminded of the extreme difficulty of saying anything that would be equally sensible and useful for the home and foreign reader. When an article was quoted abroad, it was read from a different angle, and very often used to point an entirely different moral from what one had intended.

One might wish, for instance, to rebuke English chauvinists, yet it was very difficult to do it in such a way as not to furnish apt quotations to German chauvinists alleging British excesses in justification of their own follies. In these years the militarists of each side hugged the pacifists of the other to their bosoms, and found the desired evidence of aggressive intentions in the very protests which were being made against them. There were endless suspicions on all sides, and the French were extraordinarily sensitive. If one said anything civil about Germany, one was supposed in France to be backing out of the Entente. The only solution of this problem that I could think of was to preface almost everything said by a plain statement that we would not let our security be imperilled by German preparations or our understanding with France be broken by German hostility. That being said, it was possible to plead for accommodation. But it was groping all the way, and though it was necessary to put on an appearance of self-confidence, one knew it to be groping.

Looking back on the journalism of this time, I should say now that though we had studied and theoretically understood the bearings of the European system, it was not really part of our thoughts in the same way that it was part of the thoughts of the German, the Frenchman, or the Austrian. I find in the files of October, 1908, a special article of my own in which I argue that, provided we kept command of the sea, the danger of war between Britain and Germany alone was negligible, and that the only war of which we need think seriously was a war of the Alliances in which we might be entangled. The conclusion seems so obvious now that one can hardly think of it as needing to be argued then, but the Anglo-German rivalry was, certainly in those days, thought of as a thing apart from the Entente, and not necessarily associated with the remoter affairs of Europe. In these months, though we were in the middle of what we now know to have been a serious crisis affecting our own policy, the lively personal incident of the German Emperor's indiscretion, which concerned us alone, thrust everything else into the background.

I should criticize my own comments at this time as having yielded too much to this mood and not having insisted sufficiently on the importance *to us*, through its indirect consequences, of the Balkan crisis. One or two articles at the beginning state this aspect of the matter in perfectly correct terms, but it is not followed up, and after a few weeks the dangerous affair runs underground, with little notice from the leader-writer. Looking back on it is to be reminded of the limitations and inadequacies of the daily point of view.

CHAPTER XVIII

TWO STORMY YEARS

The Imperial Press Conference—An Ambitious Scheme—"No Stock in Politicians"—A Tribute to the Politicians—Lord Rosebery's Masterpiece—The Eight Dreadnoughts—Morality and Foreign Policy—The Big Budget—The Limehouse Speeches—"Damning the Consequences"—Difficulties with the Irish—Asquith and Alec Murray—The Threatened Creation of Peers.

I

IN June, 1909, the Imperial Press Union held its meeting in London, and leading journalists from all parts of the Empire were guests of the British Press. My colleagues appointed me Chairman of the Conference Committee, and we conceived the ambitious idea of holding daily conferences on four days in the week at which the leading Ministers and ex-Ministers should debate with our guests on Imperial affairs, in fact, a replica in a freer style of the Imperial Conference which was taking place the same year between the Imperial Government and the statesmen of the Dominions. From the beginning of March I began badgering all eminent beings in office or out of it, writing, calling, and refusing to take excuses. Iwan Müller, of the *Telegraph*, lent a hand when I reported myself baffled by any Unionist leader whom we desired to bring in. We got one curt refusal from a Conservative peer who replied frigidly in terms which implied that he was not accustomed to consort with journalists, but he was not a very important person. All the rest realized that the occasion was a really important one, and some of them put themselves out considerably and even returned from holidays abroad to be present. Balfour, I remember, was specially helpful, and I have a lively recollection of a very agreeable lunch with him at Carlton Gardens to discuss our plans.

The Foreign Office lent us a room, and our programme was, I really think, unique. First day, "Imperial Cable Communications," with Crewe, then Colonial Secretary, presiding, and Austen Chamberlain and Sydney Buxton supporting him. Next two days, "The Press and the Empire," with McKenna, First Lord of the Admiralty, in the chair one day, and Balfour in the chair the other day; speakers: Edward Grey, Lord Cromer, Lord Roberts, Sir John French, Lord Esher, Haldane and Alfred Lyttelton. Fourth day, "Literature and Journalism," with Lord Morley in the chair; speakers: Birrell, Winston Churchill, Milner, T. P. O'Connor, W. L. Courtney and E. R. Russell. The first day was to be on business specially interesting to the Press; the second and third days were to cover all subjects of Imperial and foreign policy and defence, and we were to wind up with a symposium on the art and craft of the journalist. In addition to these conferences, Rosebery was to preside over the inaugural and Asquith over the final banquet.

It seemed a perfect combination, and I presented it with some pride to the preliminary meeting with our guests on the Saturday afternoon previous to the great week for which this feast of reason was prepared. Alas, for fame! They had heard of few of these heroes, and, as I recited their names, the faces of our guests grew longer, and at the end there was a painful silence, which was only broken when one courageous man expressed his keen disappointment. I begged them all to speak freely, and they said almost in unison that these politicians might be all very well, but that in their countries journalists took little stock in politicians and they had not come all these thousands of miles to talk to *them*. What they expected was that these conferences would be on really serious and practical affairs affecting the Press, such as cable communications, to which, as they noticed with regret, only one day had been assigned.

I felt crestfallen, but tried to put the best face on it. I said that unfortunately this programme was settled now, and that, though I must ask them to bear as patiently as they could with our politicians for the two days assigned to

Imperial questions, I would endeavour to arrange for two more days in the following week for the further discussion of cables and other matters of special concern to the Press. This helped, and on this understanding they promised to go through with it.

Then a very interesting thing happened. On the Friday evening, after the fourth day of our conferences, a deputation of our guests came to me and asked whether it was possible to cancel the arrangements made for the two extra conferences on cables and Press matters, and to devote those two days to a continuance of the conferences on Imperial affairs. They said quite frankly and modestly that they had had no idea on the previous Saturday what our politics and politicians were like, that they had been profoundly interested, and only wished to hear more. Above all, that they had got entirely new views of the importance to them of the European affairs which had been debated and of the questions of Imperial defence which had arisen out of them, and they would be in a better position than ever before to enlighten their countrymen about these. I said I was afraid that we must hold to the new programme so far as to devote one of these conferences to the question of cables, but that I would do my best to change the other back to Imperial questions. This I was able to do, with the result that, though the Cable Conference was very thinly attended, the other was thronged, and with Esher in the chair and Charles Beresford taking part, we wound up the week with an all-round debate of the liveliest character.

I recall this incident because it was equally creditable to our guests and to our own politicians. The Conference was quite the most interesting thing of the kind I ever attended, and the spectacle of men of all parties appearing together and debating with the Press delegates was not the less timely because it came at a moment when these delegates might otherwise have imagined that we were torn by irreparable domestic feuds. I have been told, in after years, that this occasion materially contributed to the powerful support given to the common cause by the Dominion Press in the war. I do not, of course, suggest that they needed any incitement to patriotism, but the interest kindled did, I think, help them to realize the seriousness of the times and put them in the way of getting knowledge which made their support more effective. A conference of this kind could, of course, only take place in London, and the experience suggests that periodic conferences with the Dominion Press in London are only less important than the official Imperial Conferences.

The lambs and lions of the Press lay down together for this occasion. We were all in it together. Northcliffe, Burnham, St. Loe Strachey, Iwan Müller, H. A. Gwynne, J. L. Garvin, myself and many others. Harry Brittain was organizer of entertainments, and incomparable at the job. King Edward took a kindly interest and attended a garden party for our guests given by the Prince of Wales at Marlborough House. The King was specially obliging on one matter. He had commanded Rosebery for his Ascot party on the very day on which we wanted him to take the chair and make the chief speech at our opening banquet. Rosebery said he would come if the King would excuse him, but that I must manage that part of the business. I went straight to see Knollys at Buckingham Palace, and in a few hours I was authorized to convey to Rosebery that the King thought it of the highest importance that he should preside on this occasion and would release him for the purpose. His speech was a *tour de force* in most discouraging circumstances. We had decided to hold this banquet in the White City, and assembled in a vast temporary hall, of which the acoustic qualities were abominable at the best. But on the evening chosen a band was playing just outside, and from nine onwards there was a display of fireworks. Rosebery made his speech to an accompaniment of the most appalling noises and explosions—rockets crackling, bombs exploding, catherine-wheels spluttering—but through it all he kept an unruffled composure and not only managed to make himself heard, but was acclaimed by the Dominion guests as an incomparable orator. If I were asked to-day to name the most extraordinary performance by a public man I ever witnessed, I should say unhesitatingly Rosebery's on this occasion. All through that evening I felt deeply guilty at having let him in for this, but he did no more than chaff me lightly on my stage-management.

II

My memories of the first six months of 1909 are mainly of the rising struggle on the naval question. It went on incessantly in the Cabinet and in the rank and file of the Party, and I was constantly arguing and corresponding with one side or the other. I was for McKenna's programme, and no abatement of it, and did some fetching and carrying between him and his opponents, and sometimes went to Fisher for munitions, which he liberally provided. McKenna and Fisher would have been content with six new Dreadnoughts, but a singular series of manœuvres landed both parties in a position in which the choice lay between eight and four, and from that point the victory of eight was certain. This controversy was even more important than we supposed, for even with eight the margin of safety proved to be only just enough when the war came. There was a moment when McKenna's resignation seemed inevitable—for his mind was rightly made up to resign rather than yield—but this was only through a temporary misunderstanding on the part of his friends in the Cabinet, and a word of explanation brought them to his rescue.

Always in these years one came back to the question of sea power. I was often irritated at both French and Russian policy, and never could feel that the Entente bound us to support or refrain from criticizing the proceedings of either Government. But it was terribly clear that a war, from whatever cause, which resulted in their subjection to Germany, must place us in a position of the utmost peril. Already, with the aid of the French fleet, we had the greatest difficulty in maintaining our superiority in the North Sea and guarding our interests in the Mediterranean, and if we could suppose the French fleet wiped out, or at the disposal of the Germans, and the Channel ports in their hands, the balance would immediately be tipped against us. Favourably as one might think of the German people, one could not look at German policy, as conducted since 1870, and suppose that a free existence would be possible for the British Empire if Germany secured this position of vantage.

This really was what was involved, when the Germans decided on constructing a great fleet. That fleet might be only, as Tirpitz and Bülow have explained, to teach us to keep a civil tongue in our heads, but from 1900 onwards it was plainly going to be of a size which, if any other considerable fleet were added to it, would be fatal to our position at sea and in the world. It was exasperating to find that even friendly Germans were unable to understand what their Government was doing, or why we were compelled to join hands with France and Russia. They talked of the purity of their intentions and their indefeasible right to construct such a navy as they thought necessary to protect their own commerce. It was impossible to debate with them on this ground. Their rights were unquestionable, but it was an exasperating blindness which failed to perceive that the exercise of them was disastrous.

More and more in these years it was brought home to one that there was a mechanical side to the European problem which could not be argued in terms of common morality. On a particular issue France and Russia might be wrong, as I think they often were, and Germany right; but if war broke out on this issue, the consequences to us of their defeat would still have been so disastrous that we should have had to intervene to prevent it, even if we had to do so on what was morally the "wrong side." This was an inevitable result of resting the peace of Europe on a balance of forces which could not be disturbed without the direst peril to one group or the other. When the Germans spoke of *realpolitik*, and the French begged us to look at the situation "objectively," they meant that it was the duty of statesmen to look first to this play of forces in the world and to consider what it was necessary to do, having regard to it. The system being what it was, they were right, and we who imagined that we could remain aloof till the last moment, and then decide our course on the merits of a particular dispute, were living in illusion. We might use this theory of our aloofness to put pressure on our friends in Europe and to moderate their action, but if, in spite of us, war broke out, we too, it was plain, would immediately be in danger.

In any case it seemed an elementary precaution that the British navy should be beyond challenge. But zeal in this cause brought many remonstrances and, as already recorded, involved me in a very warm dispute with Churchill and Lloyd George, who challenged the Admiralty figures and saw ruin to finance, if its big programme were adopted. Others, whom I sincerely respected, said that the *Westminster* had abandoned Liberalism and was playing into the hands of jingoes and panic-mongers. It was difficult in the circumstances to avoid tipping the balance to that side. The argument had to be pointed at Germany, for it was her Navy Law that had necessitated our programme, and this programme required the assumption that she was or would be hostile. Nothing was less desirable than that there should be a public controversy on these terms between two nations in times of peace, yet nothing less could have satisfied the waverers who doubted the necessity of the Admiralty programme. All one could hope was to make this necessary mischief a little less mischievous than it might have been with loss of temper, but there were times when one wished that the House of Commons might have conducted this controversy in secret session.

III

The big Navy programme necessitated the big Budget, and Lloyd George quite properly insisted that his insurance and social reform programme should not be curtailed for the financing of the ships. Also his view was that in the main the rich ought to pay, and in an ascending scale in proportion to their wealth—a principle which is now accepted as incontestable, but which then raised fierce opposition. In the scales in which we now measure public finance, the Budget of 1909 looks trivial and the passions which it aroused seem to belong to another world. I objected to some details and, though greatly approving of the land valuation proposals, thought that they ought not to be part of the Budget, but it never occurred to me or, so far as I know, to any Liberal journalist as possible that either on the main proposals or on these details the Unionist party would go the unheard-of length of using the House of Lords to destroy a Budget. Until the autumn of this year all parties had regarded that stroke as outside the practice, if not the law, of the Constitution. By resorting to it the Tories irretrievably damaged the House of Lords and restored the fortunes of the Liberal party, which, in the early months of 1909, seemed at a very low ebb.

If one asks why the Unionist party committed what now looks like an act of inconceivable folly, the short answer is Lloyd George. Had the Budget been in Asquith's hands, it would almost certainly have been let pass after more or less protest. But the Budget plus Lloyd George and the Limehouse speeches drove the Tory party off its mental balance. It saw red and acted accordingly. To be truthful, one is bound to add that the Limehouse speeches caused some mental disturbances even in the Liberal party. There were anxious shakings of heads behind the scenes; every morning at the *Westminster* I found my letter-bag full of earnest remonstrances from moderate men and "lifelong Liberals," some of which I felt bound to print. I was asked what I was doing with my well-earned reputation for moderation, that I did not come out in protest. The truth was that I had a very large sympathy with this vivid way of kindling emotion on behalf of the underdog. I couldn't have written as Lloyd George spoke; I had neither the talent nor the inclination, but this was incapacity rather than virtue. I thought it salutary that someone should speak in this way, for the apathy about the social question seemed impenetrable, and I was not going to rebuke him because he offended an academic taste.

But, indeed, the Limehouse speeches, as for short one may call them, were extraordinarily good speeches, and even the academics need not disdain to look back at them. Sir William Anson, who was a fairly fastidious academic, told me some three years later that he considered one of the series—delivered, I think, at Edinburgh—to be the finest exercise in platform oratory in our time, though it need hardly be said that he detested almost every sentiment expressed in it. In those months I began to have the highest hopes of Lloyd George, and especially I liked the way in which he went imperturbably on, in spite of his critics. He and Asquith began to seem like a perfect combination, each supplying the deficiencies of the other, and providing between them the requisite compound of zeal and gravity. Lloyd George could never have presented the Constitutional argument in the incomparable way that Asquith did, and Asquith, with his colder temperament, could not have kindled emotions as Lloyd George did.

All through the summer we expected the Budget to pass—after more or less turmoil—before Parliament rose for the autumn. In May *The Times* very sensibly told the Unionist party that "bending all energies to amending the Budget was a much more practical proceeding than joining in the nonsense talked in some quarters about the intervention of the House of Lords." but these counsels of prudence grew fainter as the weeks passed, and their place was taken by exhortations to the Party to do its duty and "damn the consequences," as Milner said in a speech at Glasgow. The Budget was dressed up as the abomination of desolation, the horned beast of the Prophet Daniel, and the beast of the Revelation rolled in one. Pictures were painted of the countryside being laid desolate, great houses closed, gardeners and footmen dismissed, charities starved, people compelled to emigrate through the impoverishment that would ensue. Sir Francis Mowatt, who was one of my principal sources of information during these weeks, wrote an article for the *Westminster* pointing out that the extra money to be raised in taxation was one half of a farthing in the pound of the total income of the country. But those who had to pay the half farthing were not to be appeased, and the country rang with their cries. Then the Tariff Reformers chopped in, thinking it a good opportunity to destroy the Government and present an "alternative Budget," in which the half farthing would be paid by the foreigner. A Unionist Free Trade peer wrote to me at the end of September that behind the scenes on their side there was a "hurly-burly of dukes, brewers, dervishes, and other wild men, all protesting that if we don't kill the Budget, they will kill us."

The Unionist calculation was that they would either wipe out the Liberal majority or reduce it to a point at which it would be incapable of taking any action against the Lords. Liberals were by no means sure that they would not succeed, and some by-elections in the early autumn had an ugly appearance. It was an exhausting and anxious time, in which holidays had to be wiped out and work was incessant. Gould was at his very best, and his chaff of the "dukes" provided most effective and always good-humoured electioneering material. Again he showed his extraordinary skill and quickness in reducing complicated political arguments to homespun pictorial form. Nothing that I could write carried half so far as these drawings of his, published all over the country and circulated as electioneering leaflets. Through Geake, who was its chief, the Liberal Publication Department and the *Westminster* were all but amalgamated in these times of stress, and both of us made the utmost use of Gould.

IV

It was a relief to find the Party back with a sufficient, though reduced, majority at the end of January, 1910. The Government had a clear majority, apart from the Irish, but not, of course, with the Irish voting against them. We had never thought of this before the Election, but an Irish revolt became a grim possibility immediately afterwards. The Irish detested the new liquor duties, and intimated that they would not vote for them and might even vote against them, unless it was clear that the Liberal party were in earnest about Home Rule and would go forward with that immediately. To withdraw this part of the Budget would have been ignominious, and to make any bargain under pressure most damaging. I had many interviews with Irish members during these weeks, and one with Redmond himself, at which, I am afraid, we both grew rather heated. His argument was, from his point of view, incontestable. He had been patient all through the previous Parliament and had made no complaint when the Liberal majority had been used for British Radical purposes. If he did nothing now, when he had the power in his hands, he and his party would be ruined in Ireland. My reply was that he had been treated with perfect fairness by both C. B. and Asquith in the previous Parliament, that the circumstances had been clearly explained to him before the 1906 Election, and he had not objected. Therefore he had no reasonable ground of complaint, and if he used his power now in the way he hinted at, he would destroy the Government and reinstate the Lords without helping himself. In the next few weeks the *Westminster* repeated incessantly that if Redmond chose to destroy the Budget he must do it and the blood be on his own head, but that the Government could neither withdraw the liquor taxes nor bargain with him about the future. It was a time of dejection and confusion, and all manner of wild suggestions—including even the suggestion that we should dispense with a Budget altogether—were made for the evasion of this issue, but the trouble passed and the 1909 Budget went through the 1910 Parliament with Irish support.

If 1909 was Lloyd George's year, 1910 was Asquith's—or so I always think of it on looking back. Watching him at work during these months, I got a profound respect for his coolness and steadfastness, his short way with the wild men, his careful measurement of the forces behind him, his determination not to stretch them to more than they were worth or to appease anybody by promises which he could not fulfil. Lloyd George was subject to sudden reactions, and he swung from Limehouse to Carlton Gardens and sanguinely believed that he and Balfour could settle everything round a table. Asquith was willing that everything should be tried, but he was coolly sceptical about the new Coalition and had his plans laid to go at once to the country, when it broke down. He was not going to ask the new Sovereign for "guarantees" to deal with either the Lords or the Irish question on the strength of the Budget election, and he was not going to shirk. Those who charge Asquith with lack of decision have forgotten these weeks. This time it was the left wing which held back, and it was said loudly behind the scenes that Asquith had ruined everything by his precipitancy. Through all these months there was no question who was leading, and if the conflict had to be, Asquith saved us from all brawling, and raised it to a high plane of constitutional argument.

If the honours of this year are at all divided, it is Alec Murray, the Master of Elibank, who must share them. Long intimacy blinded me to the faults which his enemies alleged; I found him always cheerful and considerate, and willing to put himself to any trouble to do me a kindness. His ample figure and full-moon face, with its fringe of curls, were always a pleasant vision, and he had a persuasive manner that was hard to resist. He was in some ways *the* character of these times, and his chronic good humour soothed many savage breasts. Beside Elibank I felt myself a mere beginner in the art of smoothing. He knew exactly what to say to Redmond, and when to say it; he kept Lloyd George from boiling over, and raised Asquith's temperature when it seemed to be falling. He soothed the rich Liberals who were uneasy about Limehouse, and got large cheques out of them to be used for their own despoiling. When two people quarrelled, he was at infinite pains to bring them together again, and could make each of them seriously believe that the other was pining for reconciliation. It was pleasant to be in his company, if only to realize for the first time in one's life what charming things other people, who were very disagreeable to one's face, were saying about one behind one's back.

Yet behind this pleasant mask was a very determined, astute and wary man. From the moment that he appeared on the scene as Chief Whip, he was laying his plans and filling his coffers for two elections ahead. He was always for swift action when the moment came, and from the moment that Liberals and Tories went into conference in 1910 his mind, like Asquith's, was made up that there must be an Election at once, if it failed. His work was done in December, 1910, but after he had retired and gone into business he was still a perpetual *revenant* to the political scene, and was benevolently busy among politicians during the first years of the war. Then his one aim in life was to prevent a breach between Asquith and Lloyd George, and once more he put himself to infinite trouble to avoid it. I think to the end he was persuaded that if he had been Chief Whip, it would have been avoided, and he even seemed to think it within the range of possible achievement to bring Northcliffe into the same fold with both of them.

* * * *

King Edward's death cut across the turbulent politics of the year 1910, and the inter-party Conference was a response to the hushed mood of these months. As the mood passed, the old antagonisms returned and the backwoods peers said that if they had to submit they would rather go down fighting than have their privileges bartered away in secret. It was a disastrous mistake for Conservative interests and for the country in general. It threw Ireland to Sinn Fein, and left the Liberal party with no alternative but the suspensory veto for dealing with the peers. I always had serious misgivings about that, not because I thought it too drastic, but because any kind of decision between the two Houses, when feeling was roused, seemed to be better than the prolonging of bitter controversy over two years. I do not for a moment pretend to have foreseen the course of the Irish question, or Carson's threat of armed rebellion during the suspensory period, but the maintenance of an open question seemed to me on general principles undesirable. The *Westminster* supported the suspensory veto as the necessary next move while maintaining that it was not the final solution, but reservations counted for nothing in the mêlée that followed. Up to the end it was in doubt whether the Lords would pass the Bill or wait for the creation of peers, and I shall always remember the fright I had when Grey said to me seriously one day that if peers had to be created, he thought it would be my positive duty to be one of them. My name seems to have been on one of the lists printed in provincial papers, for an executor, in sending me a cheque for a legacy which was due to me, expressed the amiable hope that the testatrix's memory would not be soiled by the use of her money to deck me out as a pseudo-peer to subvert the Constitution. The Whips kept their counsel about the peers to be created, if the emergency required this step, but I believe that they had an extraordinarily good list in readiness, and that the House of Lords would not have lost but greatly gained in distinction and influence from the contemplated addition to its numbers.

CHAPTER XIX

SOME DIFFICULT QUESTIONS

The Agadir Crisis—Lloyd George's Speech—A Dinner with Metternich—Philosophy at Whittingehame—An Admiralty Crisis—Lord Loreburn's Remonstrance—Churchill and Fisher—An Article and the Kaiser's Comment.

I

EXCEPT for the eternal Navy question, foreign affairs slumbered in the Press during the last half of 1909 and nearly the whole of 1910. In 1911 came the Agadir crisis, but that, too, was largely behind the scenes. My own feelings were rather mixed about this affair. It seemed to me that the French march to Fez was a defiance of the Act of Algeciras and that if it was necessary, as alleged, for the defence of life and property against insurgent tribes, it ought to have been arranged in advance with the Germans. Rightly or wrongly I thought that the case had been very clumsily handled, and that some return blow was to be expected from Germany. The awkwardness of the return blow—the despatch of the "Panther" to Agadir—was first that it came *after* the French had acknowledged the German claim to compensation and supposed themselves to be in the way to an amicable settlement, and next that it seemed specially to be aimed at us. The story ran that there had been long and friendly talks between Jules Cambon, the French Ambassador in Berlin, and Kiderlen-Waechter, the German Foreign Secretary, and that Jules Cambon, on returning to Paris with what he flattered himself was a satisfactory basis of settlement, had found the news-sellers crying the news of the German coup. Not for the first time the military party seems to have seized the reins from the Foreign Office in Berlin, and turned an awkward affair into a dangerous crisis just when the diplomatists supposed they had settled it.

A dangerous crisis it was, and Lloyd George's famous Mansion House speech made the public aware of its ugly possibilities. The point of this speech and its usefulness at the time was that Lloyd George made it.* Grey could have made it and people would have said it was only Grey. But when Lloyd George, the Radical, the pacifist, the "pro-German," appeared on the scene, the conclusion was drawn that the country and Cabinet were unanimous, and that it would be useless to presume on dissensions. It has been suggested that a similar impression would have been made upon Germany in the week before the Great War, if someone had said as clearly what Lloyd George said in 1911. There is no parallel between the two cases, because any speech of the kind in 1914 would have broken the Cabinet and evoked active protests from the anti-war group. In 1911 the Radicals acquiesced, and the public interest was soon extinguished by the struggle between Lords and Commons which was then in its last phase. Few people were aware of the difficult and sometimes dangerous negotiations which continued all through the summer and until near the end of October. During these weeks I went several times to talk to Metternich, and got the impression that he was both perplexed and alarmed. He seemed to have no definite knowledge, and, rightly or wrongly, I guessed that a struggle was going on in Berlin between the Foreign Office and the authors of the Agadir coup which made it difficult for him to say anything positive. The best construction that could be put on the despatch of the "Panther" was that it was a clumsy attempt to force a favourable bargain with the French; the worst, that it was a deliberate challenge by the German war-makers to us. The Germans themselves did not seem to know which they intended it to be, and it was perhaps a merciful circumstance that while they were making up their minds, the English public and the newspapers were mainly occupied with the domestic crisis and the burning question of the creation of peers.

All through July and the greater part of August those behind the scenes were in great anxiety. One day towards the end of August, Metternich asked me to dine with him at the house in Clarges Street of one of the Secretaries of the Embassy whom I knew slightly. There were one or two other guests, but immediately after dinner the Ambassador took me aside and told me he thought the situation most grave. We talked for a gloomy hour, and then he asked me to walk back with him to Carlton House Terrace. As we walked, he said that the only gleam of light he had seen for several days was an article he had read the day before in the *Westminster*, and that if that represented the view of the Government there was still hope. The article had said that it was an entire mistake to suppose that we were inciting the French to resist the German claim to compensation; that, on the contrary, we wished them to go to the utmost lengths they thought possible to conciliate the Germans, and that we were not exploiting the situation to get any advantage for ourselves. I believed, indeed felt certain, that this was the line that Grey was taking, but I had not asked his advice before writing the article, and I felt in a considerable difficulty about taking on myself to be his spokesman. I told the Ambassador frankly that the article was my own and uninspired but that I believed it to state accurately the view of the Government. He said, if that were so, he should be immensely relieved, and though he should have liked a definite official assurance, what I had said had much reassured him.

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* Needless to say, this speech was not made on Lloyd George's initiative without consultation with his colleagues. Both Grey and the Prime Minister knew and approved of what he was going to say.

The details of this evening still remain in my memory—our talk sitting by the window-sill in the dim-lit room, the walk out into the bright moonlight, Metternich's long pauses and dejection, my own sudden look into the abyss. It seemed incredible that one stroke of ill-temper on the part of unknown people in Berlin could have these awful consequences, yet we had seriously to debate it.

Metternich never on any occasion, as I have said, gave his Government away in talking to any Englishman, or admitted that they could have made a mistake. Yet one often suspected that his loyalty in defending them when he thought them to be wrong, made him much more prickly than he would have been if he had thought them right. The irritation which he really felt with his own superiors was transferred to us, when we were annoyed at their behaviour, and he slightly overdid his part. I do not know if it was so on this occasion, but I could get no admission from him except what was implied in his reiterated complaint that we would do nothing that he could place in a favourable light before his Government. There was always this difficulty in dealing with Metternich; he seemed to be stiff, and he got stiff answers in return. We had, moreover, to reckon with the fact, which Grey has brought out in his narrative, that almost any concession on our part in these years was used to suggest to the French that we were cooling towards the Entente. It is doubtful whether any friendlier diplomatic method could have helped in this atmosphere. There could have been no friendlier man than Lichnowsky, and he failed. Always with Metternich one knew the worst, and it could never be said of him that he led one on any false scent of delusive hope.

II

We were at Dunbar for a few days in October this year, and I find notes of a morning spent with the Asquiths, who were then staying at Archerfield, and of an afternoon visit to Balfour at Whittingehame. Balfour was at tennis as we came up, and, watching for a little while, I concluded that his underhand cuts needed some playing. Then he came in and gave us tea, and for an hour we sat talking Bergson, whose "Evolution Créatrice" had just been published. Balfour had reviewed it in the *Hibbert Journal*, and I had reviewed both the book and his review of it in the *Westminster*. I suggested that Bergson's notion of a "certain elasticity in matter" was substantially the same thing as the Epicurean theory propounded by Lucretius of " a bend in the atoms" (*clinamen principiorum*), permitting the stream of matter to escape from the pre-ordained straight course to which it must otherwise be confined. From this we passed to a discussion of the shifts to which philosophers had been put to avoid mechanistic conclusions and find a footing for freedom and variety. In that way a delightful hour passed without, so far as I can remember, a word on politics. Meeting Balfour on this neutral ground, one always regretted that the boundaries which enclosed the politician made encounters with the philosopher so rare a chance for the Liberal journalist. That afternoon at Whittingehame, in the middle of our stormy politics, remains always a very pleasant memory.

Talk with Asquith on the morning of that day had been mainly on the pending change at the Admiralty, which for a time threatened serious trouble to the Government. Haldane was pressing for reorganization of the Admiralty on lines to which McKenna and Fisher objected, and Asquith had permitted McKenna to take me into his confidence—not as a journalist but as an old friend—so that we might consult together as to what was best and wisest for him to do. The upshot was that he went from the Admiralty to the Home Office—then vacant through the appointment of Gladstone as High Commissioner of South Africa—and so opened up the line of advance which brought him to the Chancellorship of the Exchequer and enabled him to do great work for the country in time of war. A beautiful silver inkstand which McKenna gave me commemorates these days, and is now on my library table.

I was in McKenna's room at the House of Commons a few days later discussing these affairs (which included hypothetical plans for joint action with the French in time of war) when Loreburn, then Lord Chancellor, came in, and hearing our talk suddenly turned on me and asked by what right I knew about these Cabinet secrets. McKenna explained that he had obtained the Prime Minister's permission to consult me as a friend and to put all the circumstances before me, but Loreburn was not appeased. He said it was monstrous that I, a mere journalist, should know things that were unknown to him, Cabinet Minister and Lord Chancellor, and went on to denounce the hole-and-corner system which had placed foreign policy in the hands of a little group of Liberal jingoes ever since the Government was formed.

I am revealing no secrets, for this was the burden of the complaint which he set out in the book which he wrote at the end of the war, and I do not doubt that he was honestly aggrieved. But it is none the less a surprising fact that he should have been in ignorance of the trend of events in these years. It seems natural to suppose that a Cabinet Minister who had followed the Algeciras and the Bosnia-Herzegovina crises and read the papers circulated to the Cabinet on these matters would have inquired about the measures being taken to prepare for joint action, in case it should be necessary, unless indeed he took for granted that such measures were being taken and was content to leave them in the hands of the War Office and Admiralty. It is difficult to believe that any Minister could have accepted responsibility for the policy which was being publicly followed on these occasions, and yet have supposed that there was no need to take these precautions. Dealing with these affairs day by day as a journalist, I naturally made anxious inquiries at the critical moments as to how we stood, if the worst happened, and it never occurred to me that Cabinet Ministers did less. If the journalist knew more than the Minister about these elementary things, it was certainly no blame to the journalist, and I imagine that every competent writer dealing with foreign affairs in these years was acquainted with the facts of which some Ministers afterwards declared themselves ignorant.

This affair wound up in a way which was surprising to me, and I think to McKenna. I assumed that Haldane, who had been the moving spirit in demanding a new policy at the Admiralty, would be the new First Lord, and was not at all prepared for the appointment of Churchill, who only two years earlier had been one of McKenna's principal opponents about the eight Dreadnoughts. The appointment was momentous, for it put in charge of the Admiralty the man who was the chief sponsor of the Dardanelles expedition, but at the time it made no visible change in policy. Churchill did not reconstruct the Admiralty in the manner that Haldane proposed, and he continued to work with Fisher and on much the same lines as his predecessor. Fisher was at first a good deal perturbed, and there were rumours that he would resign if McKenna went. He happened to be in Naples at the time, and he wrote to me in much agitation about what he ought to do. My view was that as a servant of the Government it was his duty to act with one First Lord as with another, and that no loyalty to McKenna required him to depart from the Admiralty because McKenna went to the Home Office. I see from my record that he asked me to endeavour to remove the idea, which he supposed Churchill to entertain, that he (Fisher) was hostile to him and would bear a grudge for the part that Churchill had played in 1909. I cannot remember what action I took, if any, but in the light of subsequent events, I should be doubtful now whether a real service was rendered to either of them by anyone who urged them to work together.

III

When the Agadir crisis was finally wound up, I sat down and wrote a series of articles surveying the whole field of European policy, and the British part in it, for publication in the *Westminster* during the weeks that I was going to be absent in India. Starting from the two fixed points that we should remain faithful to the Entente and that we should in no circumstances permit our naval supremacy to be challenged by Germany, I proceeded to discuss what could be done to save the peace and end the Anglo-German quarrel. As recorded in the Life of Ballin, these articles played some part in the discussions that preceded Haldane's visit to Berlin, in 1912, and one of them, reprinted in facsimile, with liberal annotations by the Kaiser, appears as an appendix to that book. The resuscitation of sixteen-year-old articles is not generally an agreeable process for journalists, and I own I looked at it with considerable apprehension when it reappeared in this form. If I may say so without complacency, it seems to me even now moderately good sense if read in the context of its time, and one or two passages with the Kaiser's comments may be worth recalling. I wrote :—

> I am concerned here with British policy, and it is no part of my business to enlarge upon what Germany should do. But briefly, the object for her, if she wishes to make an end of the Anglo-German contention, is to convince us that she is not aiming at a European hegemony in which we shall be the next victim after France is disposed of. I put it thus baldly, not to accuse her of that design, but in order to define accurately what has been at the back of all the diplomatic encounters of the last seven years.

This passage is heavily underlined, and "Unmitigated nonsense" is written in the margin on one side, and "Are not twenty-three years of my Government enough as a proof that nobody here dreams of such nonsense?" in the margin on the other side.

A little lower down I quoted Lord Salisbury's description of our old pro-Turkish and anti-Russian policy as a "backing of the wrong horse." The Kaiser writes in the margin, "That is what England has been doing for the last seven years!"

I wrote: "The command of the sea would become intolerable to our neighbours if it became in practice a veto on their expansion." The Kaiser comments, "So it is!"

I wrote: "The suspicion of England extends to every German Embassy and Consulate all over the world." Against this the Kaiser writes, "Yes," but when I go on to say that there has been pin-pricking "on either side," he underlines the word "either" and puts ??! in the margin.

Finally come some general observations in German in which I get a little praise with much chastening:—

> Quite good, except for the ridiculous insinuation that we are aspiring after the hegemony in Central Europe. We simply *are* Central Europe, and it is quite natural that other and smaller nations should tend towards us and should be drawn into our sphere of action owing to the law of gravity, particularly so if they are of our own kin. To this the British object, because it absolutely knocks to pieces their theory of the Balance of Power, i.e. their desire to be able to play off one European Power against another at their own pleasure, and because it would lead to the establishment of a united Continent—a contingency which they want to prevent at all costs. Hence their lying assertion that we aim at a predominant position in Europe, while it is a fact that they claim such a position for themselves in the world politics. We Hohenzollerns have never pursued such ambitions and such fantastic aims, and, God granting it, we never shall do.
>
> (*Signed*) WILHELM I.R.

The biographer of Ballin speaks of the article with these comments as an historical document of great interest, and the Kaiser's part in it merits the description. I have said something elsewhere about the mistake which, as I think, many of us made in these years in assuming Austria-Hungary to be a mere satellite of Germany, but it must be added that if we were misled, it was largely by the Kaiser's habit of claiming to be "Central Europe" and the leader in "shining armour" of the Central European Powers.

The year 1911 had been a busy and anxious one. Through the weeks of the Agadir crisis it had been necessary to do a great deal of work behind the scenes to obtain the wherewithal for a small amount of intelligent comment. The passing of the Parliament Act had been attended with increasing commotion and excitement which compelled the editor to feed the news department as well as to impart instruction and comment. The thing had to be tackled from different points of view in the leading article, the "imaginary conversation," the "intercepted letter," reviews of the streams of books and pamphlets touching various aspects of it which were coming out. On top of this was the Royal Commission on the Divorce Laws of which Asquith had made me a member. This sat three times a week from twelve to four in the afternoon with an interval for lunch, and took all the leisure on other days. Of that I shall have a word to say in another chapter. Sufficient to say now that it was with real relief that I found myself sailing out of Marseilles on the way to India, on November 2nd. To those who like the sea there is no pleasure in life quite like that of finding oneself "free on board" after a long spell of anxious and difficult work.

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